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# J. COLE

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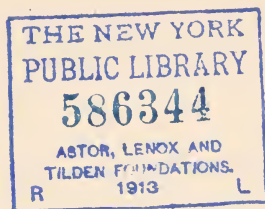
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# J. COLE.

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"Honnerd Madam,

"Wich i hav seed in the paper a page Boy wanted, and begs to say J. Cole is over thertene, and I can clene plate, wich my brutther is under a butler and lernd me, and I can wate, and no how to clene winders and boots. J. Cole opes you will let me cum. I arks 8 and all found. if you do my washin I will take seven. J. Cole will serve you well and opes to giv sattisfaxshun. i can cum tomorrer.

"J. COLE.

"P. S.—He is not verry torl but growin. My brutther is a verry good hite. i am sharp and can rede and rite and can hadd—figgers, if you like."

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## CHAPTER I.

I had advertised for a page-boy, and having puzzled through some dozens of answers, more or less illegible and impossible to understand, had come to the last one of the packet, of which the above is an exact copy.

The epistle was enclosed in a clumsy envelòpe, evidently home-made, with the aid of scissors and



gum, and was written on a half-sheet of letterpaper, in a large hand, with many blots and smears, on pencilled lines.

There was something quaint and straightforward in the letter, in spite of the utter ignorance of grammar and spelling, and while I smiled at the evident pride in the "brutther" who was a "verry good hite," and the offer to take less wages if "I would do his washin," I found myself wondering what sort of waif upon the sea of life was this not very tall person, over thirteen, who "would serve me well."

I had many letters to answer and several appointments to make, and had scarcely made up my mind whether or not to trouble to write to my accomplished correspondent, who was "sharp, and could rede and rite, and hadd figgers," when a shadow falling on the ground by me as I sat by the open window, I looked up, and saw, standing opposite my chair, a boy. The very smallest boy, with the very largest blue eyes I ever saw. The clothes on his little limbs were evidently meant for somebody almost double his size, but they were clean and tidy.

In one hand he held a bundle, tied in a red handkerchief, and in the other a bunch of wild flowers that bore signs of having travelled far in the heat of the sun, their blossoms hanging down, dusty



and fading, and their petals dropping one by one on the ground.

"Who are you, my child?" I said, "and what do you want?"

At my question the boy placed his flowers on my table, and, pulling off his cap, made a queer movement with his feet, as though he were trying to step backwards with both at once, and said, in a voice so deep that it quite startled me, so strangely did it seem to belong to the size of the clothes, and not the wearer,

"Please 'm, it's J. Cole: and I've come to live with yer. I've brought all my clothes, and everythink."

For the moment I felt a little bewildered, so impossible did it seem that the small specimen of humanity before me was actually intending to enter anybody's service; he looked so childish and wistful, and yet with a certain honesty of purpose shining out of those big, wide-open eyes that interested me in him, and made me want to know more of him.

"You are very small to go into service," I said, "and I am afraid you could not do the work I should require, besides, you should have waited to hear from me, and then have come to see me, if I wanted you to do so."

"Yes, I know I'm not very big," said the boy,



nervously fidgeting with his bundle: "leastways **not** in hite, but my arms is that long, they'll reach ever so 'igh above my 'ed, and as for bein' strong, you should jest see me lift my father's big market basket when it's loaded with 'taters, or wotever is for market, and I hope you'll not be angry because I come to-day; but Dick—that's my bruttther Dick—he says, 'You foller my advice, Joe,' he says, 'and go arter this 'ere place, and don't let no grass grow under your feet; I knows what it is goin' arter places, there's such lots a fitin' after 'em that if you lets so much as a hour go afore yer looks 'em up, there's them as slips in fust gets it, and wen yer goes to the door they opens it and sez, "It ain't no use, boy, we're sooted," and then where are yer, I'd like to know? So,' sez he, 'Joe, you look sharp and go, and maybe you'll get it.' So I cum, mum, and please, that's all."

"But about your character, my boy," I said. "You must have somebody to speak for you, and say you are honest, and what you are able to do. I always want a good character with my servants. The last page-boy I had brought three years' good character from his former situation."

"Lor!" said Joe, with a serious look, "did he stay three years in a place afore he came to you? Wotever



did he leave them people for, where he were so comfortable? If I stay with you three years, you won't catch me a leavin' yer, and goin' somewheres else. Wot a muff that chap was!"

I explained that it did not always depend on whether a servant wanted to stay or not, but whether it suited the employers to keep him.

"Praps he did somethin', and they giv 'im the sack," murmured Joe; "he was a flat!"

"But about this character of yours," I said; "if I decide to give you a trial, although I am almost sure you are too small, and won't do, where am I to go for your character? Will the people where your brother lives speak for you?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the little fellow, his cheeks flushing; "I know Dick'll ask 'em to give me a caricter. Miss Edith, I often cleaned 'er boots. Once she come 'ome in the mud, and was agoin' out agin directly; and they was lace-ups, and a orful bother to do up even; and she come into the stable-yard with 'er dog, and sez: 'Dick, will you chain Tiger up, and this little boy may clean my boots if he likes, on my feet?' So I cleaned 'em, and she giv me sixpence: and after that, when the boots come down in the mornin', I got Dick always to let me clean them little boots, and I kep 'em clean in the insides, like the



lady's maid she told me not to put my 'ands inside 'em if they was black. Miss Edith, she'll giv me a caricter, if Dick asks 'er."

Just then the visitors' bell rang, and I sent my would-be page into the kitchen to wait until I could speak to him again, and told him to ask the cook to give him something to eat.

"Here are your flowers," I said, "take them with you."

He looked at me, and then, as if ashamed of having offered them, gathered them up in his hands, and with the corner of the red handkerchief wiped some few leaves and dust-marks off my table, then saying in a low voice—"I didn't know you 'ad beauties of yer own, like them in the glass pots, but I'll giv 'em to the cook." So saying, he went away into the kitchen, and my visitors came in, and by and by some more friends arrived.

The weather was very warm, and we sat chattering and enjoying the shade of the trees by the open French window. Presently, somebody being thirsty, I suggested lemonade and ice, and I offered strawberries, and (if possible) cream, though my mind misgave me as to the latter delicacy, for we had several times been obliged to do without some of our luxuries if they entailed "fetching," as we had no boy



to run errands quickly on an emergency and be useful. However, I rang the bell, and when the housemaid, whose temper, since she had been what is curiously termed in servants'-hall language "single-handed," was most trying, entered, I said, "Make some lemonade, Mary, and ask cook to gather some strawberries quickly, and bring them, with some cream."

Mary looked at me as who should say, "Well, I'm sure! and who's to do it all? You'll have to wait a bit." And I knew we should have to wait, and therefore resigned myself to do so, patiently, keeping up the ball of gossip, and wondering if a little music later on would, perhaps, while away the time.

Much to my amazement, in less than a quarter of an hour Mary entered with a tray, all being prepared, and directly I looked at the strawberry-bowl I detected a novel feature in the table decoration. A practised hand had evidently been at work; but whose? Mary was far too matter-of-fact a person. Food, plates, knives and forks, glasses, and a cruet-stand were all she ever thought necessary; and even for a centre vase of flowers I had to ask, and often to insist, during the time she was single-handed.

But here was my strawberry-bowl, a pretty one, even when unadorned, with its pure white porcelain



stem, entwined with a wreath of blue convolvulus, and then a spray of white, the petals just peeping over the edge of the bowl, and resting near the luscious red fruit; the cream-jug, also white, had twining flowers of blue, and round the lemonade-jug, of glass, was a wreath of yellow blossoms.

"How exquisite!" exclaimed we all. "What fairy could have bestowed such a treat to our eyes and delight to our sense of the beautiful?"

I supposed some friend of the cook's or Mary's had been taking lessons in the art of decoration, and had given us a specimen.

Soon after, my friends having gone, I thought of J. Cole waiting to be dismissed, and sent for him.

Cook came in, and with a preliminary "Ahem!" which I knew of old meant, "I have an idea of my own, and I mean to get it carried out," said, "Oh, if you please 'm, if I might be so bold, did you think serious of engagin' the boy that's waitin' in the kitchen?"

"Why do you ask, Cook?" I said.

"Well, ma'am," she replied, trying to hide a laugh, "of course it's not for me to presume,—but if I might say a word for him, I think he's the very handiest and the sharpest one we've ever had in this house, and we've had a many, as you know. Why, if you'd



only have seen him when Mary come in in her tantrums at 'avin to get the tray single-handed, and begun a-grumblin' and a-bangin' things about, as is her way, being of a quick temper, though, as I tells her, too slow a-movin' of herself. As I were a-sayin', you should have seen that boy. If he didn't up and leave his bread and butter and mug of milk, as he was a-enjoyin' of as 'arty as you like, and, 'Look 'ere,' says he, 'giv me the jug. I'll make some fine drink with lemons. I see Dick do it often up at his place. Giv me the squeezer. Wait till I washes my 'ands. I won't be a minnit.' Then in he rushes into the scullery, washes his hands, runs back again in a jiffy. 'Got any snow sugar? I mean all done fine like snow.' I gave it him; and, sure enough, his little hands moved that quick, he had made the lemonade before Mary would have sqeezed a lemon. Where do yer buy the cream?' he says next. 'I'll run and get it while you picks the strawberries.' Perhaps it wasn't right, me a-trustin' him, being a stranger, but he was that quick I couldn't say no. Up he takes the jug, and was off; and when I come in from the garden with the strawberries, if he hadn't been and put all them flowers on the things. He begs my pardon for interfering like, and says, 'I 'ope you'll excuse me a-doin' of it, but the woman at the



milk-shop said I might 'av 'em; and I see the butler where Dick lives wind the flowers about like that, and 'av 'elped 'im often; and, please, I paid for the cream, because I'd got two bob of my own, Dick giv me on my birthday. Oh, I do 'ope, Mrs. Cook,' he says, 'that the lady'll take me; I'll serve 'er well, I will, indeed;' and then he begins to cry and tremble, poor little chap, for he'd been running about a lot, and never eaten or drank what I gave him, because he wanted to help, and it was hot in the kitchen, I suppose, and he felt faint like, and there he is, crying; and just now, when the bell rung, which was two great big boys after the place, he says, 'Oh, please say "We're sooted," and ask the lady if I may stay.' So, I've taken the liberty, ma'am," said Cook, "for somehow I like that little chap, and there's a deal in him, I do believe."

So saying Cook retired, and, in a moment, J. Cole was standing in her place, the blue eyes brimming over with tears, and an eager anxiety as to what his fate would be making his poor little hands clutch at his coat sleeves, and his feet shuffle about so nervously, that I had not the courage to grieve him by a refusal.

"Well, Joseph," I said, "I have decided to give you a month's trial. I shall write to the gentleman who



employs your brother, and if he speaks well of you, you may stay."

"And may I stay now, please?" he said. "May I stay before you gets any answer to your letter to say I'm all right? I think you'd better let me; there ain't no boy; and Mrs. Cook and Mary'll 'av a lot to do. I can stay in the stable, if you don't like to let me be in the house, afore you writes the letter."

"No, Joe," I replied, "you may not be a good, honest boy, but I think you are, and you shall stay here. Now, go back to Mrs. Wilson, and finish your milk, and eat something more, if you can, then have a good rest and a wash; they will show you where you are to sleep, and at dinner, this evening, I shall see if you can wait at table."

"Thank you very kindly," said the boy, his whole face beaming with delight, "and I'll be sure and do everythink I can for you." Then he went quickly out of the room, for I could see he was quite overcome, now that the uncertainty was over.

Alone once more, I reasoned with myself, and felt I was doing an unwise thing. Just at that time my husband was away on business for some months, and I had no one to advise me, and no one to say me nay either. My conscience told me my husband would say, "We cannot tell who this boy is, where he



has lived, or who are his associates; he may be connected with a gang of thieves for what we know to the contrary. Wait, and have proper references before trusting him in the house."

And he would be right to say so to me, but not every one listens to conscience when it points the opposite way to inclination. Well, J. Cole remained, and when I entered the dining-room, to my solitary dinner, he was there, with a face shining from soap and water, his curls evidently soaped too, to make them go tidily on his forehead. The former page having left his livery jacket and trousers, Mary had let Joe dress in them, at his earnest request.

She told me afterwards that he had sewn up the clothes in the neatest manner wherever they could be made smaller, and the effect of the jacket, which he had stuffed out in the chest with hay, as we discovered by the perfume, was very droll. He had a great love of bright colors, and the trousers being large, showed bright red socks; the jacket sleeves being much too short for the long arms, of which he was so proud, allowed the wristbands of a vivid blue flannel shirt to be seen.

I was alone, so could put up with this droll figure at my elbow, but the seriousness of his face was such a contrast to the comicality of the rest of him, that I



found myself beginning to smile every now and then, but directly I saw the serious eyes on me, I felt obliged to become grave at once.

The waiting at table I could not exactly pronounce a success, for although Joe's quick eyes detected in an instant if I wanted anything, his anxiety to be "first in the field," and give Mary no chance of instructing him in his duties, made him collide against her more than once in his hasty rushes to the side-board and back to my elbow with the dishes, which he generally handed to me long before he reached me, his long arms enabling him to reach me with his hands while he was yet some distance from me, and often on the wrong side. I also noticed when I wanted water he lifted the water bottle on high, and poured as though it was something requiring a "head." Mary nearly caused a catastrophe, at that moment by frowning at him, and saying, *sotto voce*, "Whatever are you doing? Is that the way to pour out water? It ain't hale, stoopid!"

Joe's face became scarlet, and to hide his confusion he seized a dish-cover, and hastily went out of the room with it, returning in a moment pale and serious as became one who at heart was every inch a family butler with immense responsibilities.



Joe was quiet and sharp, quick and intelligent, but I could see he was quite new to waiting at table. To remove a dish was, I could see, his greatest dread, and it amused me to see the cleverness with which he managed that Mary should do that part of the duty.

When only my plate and a dish remained to be cleared away, he would slowly get nearer as I got towards the last morsel, and before Mary had time, would take my plate and go quite slowly to the side-board with it, leisurely remove the knife and fork, watching meanwhile in the mirror if Mary was about to take the dish away, if not he would take something outside, or bring a decanter, and ask if I wanted wine.

I was, however, pleased to find him no more awkward, as I feared he would have been, and when having swept the grate and placed my solitary wine-glass and dessert-plate on the table, he retired, softly closing the door after him, I felt I should make something of J. Cole, and hoped his character would be good.



## CHAPTER II.

The next morning, a tastefully-arranged vase of flowers in the centre of the breakfast-table, and one magnificent rose and bud by my plate, were silent but eloquent appeals to my interest on behalf of my would-be page, and when Joe himself appeared, fresh from an hour's self-imposed work in my garden, I saw he had become quite one of the family, for Bogie, my little terrier, usually very snappish to strangers, and who considered all boys as his natural enemies, was leaping about his feet, evidently asking for more games, and our old magpie was perched familiarly on his shoulder.

"Good morning, Joe," I said. "You are an early riser, I can see, by the work you have already done in the garden."

"Why, yes," replied Joe, blushing, and touching an imaginary cap; "I'm used to bein' up. There was ever so much to do of a mornin' at 'ome; and I 'ad to 'elp father afore I could go to be with Dick, and I was with Dick a'most every mornin' by seven, and a good mile and a arf to walk to 'is place. Shall I



bring in the breakfast, mum? Mary's told me what to do."

Having given permission, Joe set to work to get through his duties, this time without any help, and I actually trembled when I saw him enter with a tray containing all things necessary for my morning meal, he looked so over-weighted; but he was quite equal to it as far as landing the tray safely on the side-board. But, alas! then came the ordeal, not one thing did poor Joe know where to place, and stood with the coffee-pot in his hand, undecided whether it went before me, or at the end of the table, or whether he was to pour out my coffee for me.

I saw he was getting very nervous, so took it from him, and in order to put him at his ease, I remarked,

"I think, perhaps, I had better show you, Joe, just for once, how I like my breakfast served, for every one has little ways of their own, you know, and you will try to do it my way when you know how I like it, won't you?"

Thereupon I arranged the dishes, etc., for him, and his big eyes followed my every movement. The blinds wanted pulling down a little presently, and then I began to realize one of the drawbacks in having such a very small boy as page. Joe saw the



sun's rays were nearly blinding me, and wanted to shut them out, but on attempting to reach the tassel attached to the cord, it was hopelessly beyond his reach. In vain were the long arms stretched to their utmost, till the sleeves of the ex-page's jacket retreated almost to Joe's elbows, but no use.

I watched, curious to see what he would do.

"Please 'm, might I fetch an 'all chair?" said Joe, "I'm afraid I'm not big enuf to reach the tossle, but I won't pull 'em up so 'igh to-morrow."

I gave permission, and carefully the chair was steered among my tables and china pots. Then Joe mounted, and by means of rising on the tips of his toes he was able to accomplish the task of lowering the blinds.

I noticed at that time that Joe wore bright red socks, and I little thought what a shock those bright-colored hose were to give me later on under different circumstances.

That evening I had satisfactory letters regarding Joe's character, and by degrees he became used to his new home, and we to him. His quaint sayings and wonderful love of the truth, added to extreme cleanliness, made him welcome in the somewhat exclusive circle in which my housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, reigned supreme.



Many a hearty burst of laughter came to me from the open kitchen-window across the garden in the leisure hour, when the servants' tea being over, they sat at work, while Joe amused them with his stories and reminiscences of the sayings and doings of his wonderful brother Dick.

This same Dick was evidently the one being Joe worshipped on earth, and to keep his promises to Dick a sacred duty.

"You don't know our Dick, Mrs. Wilson," said Joe, to the old housekeeper; "if you did, you'd understand why I no more dare go agen wot Dick told me, than I dare put my 'and in that 'ere fire. When I were quite a little chap, I took some big yaller plums once, out of one of the punnits father was a-packin' for market, and I eat 'em. I don't know to this 'our wot made me take them plums, but I remember they were such prime big uns, big as eggs they was, and like lumps of gold, with a sort of blue shade over 'em. Father were very partikler about not 'avin' the fruit 'andled and takin' the bloom off, and told me to cover 'em well with leaves. It was a broilin' 'ot day, and I was tired, 'avin' been stoopin' over the baskits since four in the mornin', and as I put the leaves over the plums I touched 'em; they felt so lovely and cool, and looked so



juicy-like, I felt I must eat one, and I did; there was just six on 'em, and when I'd bin and eat one, there seemed such a empty place left in the punnit, that I knew father'd be sure to see it, so I eat 'em all, and then threw the punnit to one side. Just then, father comes up and says, 'Count them punnits, Dick! there ought to be forty on 'em. Twenty picked large for Mr. Moses, and twenty usuals for Marts!'—two of our best customers they was. Well, Dick, he counts 'em, and soon misses one. 'Thirty-eight, thirty-nine,' he sez, and no more; 'but 'ere's a empty punnit,' he sez. I was standing near, feelin' awful, and wished I'd said I'd eat the plums afore Dick begun to count 'em, but I didn't, and after that I couldn't. 'Joe!' sez Dick, 'I wants yer! 'Ow come this empty punnit 'ere, along of the others? there's plums bin in it, I can see, 'cos it's not new. Speak up, youngster!' I looked at Dick's face, Mrs. Wilson, and his eyes seemed to go right into my throat, and draw the truth out of me. 'Speak up,' he sez, a-gettin' cross; 'if you've prigged 'em, say so, and you'll get a good hidin' from me, for a-doin' of it; but if you tells me a *lie*, you'll get such a hidin' for *that* as 'll make you remember it all your life; so speak up, say you did it, and take your hidin' like a



brick, and if you didn't prig 'em, say who did, 'cos you must 'av' seen 'em go.'

"I couldn't do nothin', Mrs. Wilson, but keep my 'ed down, and blubber out, 'Please, Dick, I eat 'em.'

"'Oh, you did, yer young greedy, did yer,' he sez; 'I'm glad yer didn't tell me a lie. I've got to giv' yer a hiding, Joe; but giv' us yer 'and, old chap, first, and mind wot I sez to yer. "*Own up to it, wotever you do,*" and take your punishment; its 'ard to bear, but when the smart on it's over yer forgets it; but if yer tells a lie to save yerself, yer feels the smart of *that* always; yer feels ashamed of yerself whenever yer thinks of it.' And then Dick give me a thrashin' he did, but I never 'ollered or made a row, tho' he hit pretty 'ard. And, Mrs. Wilson, I never could look in Dick's face if I told a lie, and I never shall tell one, I 'ope, as long as ever I live. You should just see Dick, Mrs. Wilson, he is a one-er, he is."

"Lor bless the boy," said Mary, the housemaid; "why if he ain't a-cryin' now. Whatever's the matter? One minnit you're makin' us larf fit to kill ourselves, and then you're nearly makin' us cry with your Dick, and your great eyes runnin' over like that. Now get away, and take the dogs their supper, and see if you can't get a bit of color in your cheeks before you come back."



So off Joe went, and soon the frantic barking in the stable-yard showed he had begun feeding his four-footed pets.

Time went on: it was a very quiet household just then—my husband away in America, and my friends most of them enjoying their summer abroad or at some sea-side place—all scattered here and there until autumn was over, and then we were to move to town, and spend the winter season at our house there. I hoped my dear sister and her girls would then join us, and, best of all, my dear husband be home to make our circle complete.

Day by day Joe progressed in favor with everybody; his size was always a trouble, but his extreme good nature made everybody willing to help him over his difficulties. He invented all sorts of curious tools for reaching up to high places; and the marvels he would perform with a long stick and a sort of claw at the end of it were quite astonishing.

I noticed whenever I spoke of going to town Joe did not seem to look forward to the change with any pleasure, although he had never been to London, he told me; but Dick had been once with his father, and had seen lots of strange things; among others a sad one, that made a great impres-



sion on Dick, and he had told the tale to Joe, so as to have almost as great an effect on him.

It appeared that one night Dick and his father were crossing Waterloo Bridge, and had seen a young girl running quickly along, crying bitterly. Dick tried to keep up with her, and asked her what was the matter. She told him to let her alone, that she meant to drown herself, for she had nothing to live for, and was sick of her life. Dick persuaded her to tell him her grief, and heard from her that her mother and father had both been drowned in a steamer, and she was left with a little brother to take care of; he had been a great trouble to her, and had been led away by bad companions until he became thoroughly wicked. She had been a milliner, and had a room of her own, and paid extra for a little place where her brother could sleep. She fed and clothed him out of her earnings, although he was idle, and cruel enough to scold and abuse her when she tried to reason with him, and refused to let him bring his bad companions to her home. At last, he stole nearly all she had, and pawned it; and among other things some bonnets and caps, belonging to the people who employed her, given as patterns for her to copy. These she had to pay for, and lost her situation besides. By degrees all her



clothes, her home, and all she had, went for food, and then this wicked boy left her, and the next thing she knew was that he had been taken up with a gang of burglars concerned in a jewel robbery. That day she had seen him in prison, and he was to be transported for seven years; so the poor creature, mad with grief, was about to end her life. Dick and his father would not leave her until she was quiet, and promised them she would go and get a bed and supper with the money they gave her, and they promised to see her again the next day at a place she named. The next morning they went to the address, and found a crowd round the house. Somebody said a young woman had thrown herself out of a window, and had been taken up dead. It was too true; and the girl was the wretched, heart-broken sister they had helped over-night. Her grief had been too much for her, and, poor thing, she awoke to the light of another day, and could not face it alone and destitute; so, despairing, she had ended her life. They went to the hospital, and were allowed to see all that remained of the poor creature; and Dick's description of it all, and his opinion that the brother "might have been just such another little chap at first as Joe," and "What would that brother feel," said Dick, "when he knew what he



had done? for he done it," said Dick; "he done the girl to death, the same as if he'd shov'd her out of that winder hisself."

"And," said Joe, "I wonder if them chaps is goin' about London now wot led her brother wrong? I don't like London; and I wish we could stop 'ere."

I assured Joe that in London there was no danger of meeting such people if he kept to himself, and made no friends of strangers.

Joe was also much afraid of having to wait at table when there were guests. In spite of all I could do, he was hopelessly nervous and confused when he had to wait on more than two or three people, and as I expected to entertain a good deal when we were in town, I could not help fearing Joe would be unequal to the duties.

I could not bear the idea of parting with the little fellow, for, added to his good disposition, Joe, in his dark brown livery, with gilt buttons, his neat little ties, and clean hands, his carefully brushed curls, by this time trained into better order, and shining like burnished gold in the sun; his tiny feet, with the favorite red socks, which he could and did darn very neatly himself when they began to wear out (and when he bought new ones they were always bright red)—Joe, let me tell you, was quite an orna-



ment in our establishment, and the envy of several boys living in families round about, who tried in vain to get acquainted with him, but he would not be friends, although he always refused their advances with civil words.

Sometimes a boy would linger when bringing a note or message for me, and try to draw Joe into conversation. In a few minutes I would hear Joe's deep voice say, "I think you had better go on now. I've got my work to do, and I reckon you've got yours a-waitin for yer at your place." Then the side door would shut, and Joe was bustling about his work.







### CHAPTER III.

In the beginning of October we arrived in London. There had been much packing up, and much extra work for everybody, and Joe was in his element.

What those long arms, and that willing heart, and those quick little hands got through, nobody but those he helped and worked for could tell. Whatever was wanted Joe knew where to find it. Joe's knife was ready to cut a stubborn knot; Joe's shoulders ready to be loaded with as heavy a weight as any man could carry. More than once I met him coming downstairs with large boxes he himself could almost have been packed in, and he declared he did not find them too heavy.

"You see, Missis," he said, "I'm that strong now since I've been here, with all the good food I gets, and bein' so happy like, that I feel almost up to carryin' anythink. I do believe I could lift that there pianner, if somebody would just give it a hoist, and let me get hold of it easy."



Yes, Joe was strong and well, and I am sure, happy, and I never had a single misgiving about him since he stood with his fading flowers and shabby clothes at my window that summer day.

At last we were settled in town, and the winter season beginning. Our house was situated in the West end of London, a little beyond Bayswater. One of a row of detached houses, facing another row exactly similar in every way, except that the backs of those we lived in had small gardens, with each its own stable wall at the end, with coachman's rooms above, the front of the stables facing the mews, and having the entrance from there; the mews ran all along the backs of these houses. On the opposite side the houses facing ours had their gardens and back windows facing the high road, and no stables. There was a private road belonging to this, Holling Park, as it was called, and a watchman to keep intruders out, and to stop organ-grinders, beggars, and such invaders of the peace from disturbing us.

Somehow I was never as comfortable as in my snug cottage in the country. Rich, fashionable people lived about us, and all day long kept up the round of "society life."



In the morning the large handsome houses would seem asleep, nothing moving inside or out, except a tradesman's cart, calling for orders, or workmen putting up or taking down awnings, at some house where there would be, or had been, a ball or entertainment of some kind. About eleven a carriage or two would be driven around from the mews, and stop before a house or take some one for a morning drive, but very seldom was anybody on foot seen about. In the afternoon it was different; carriages rolled along incessantly, and streams of afternoon callers were going and coming from the houses when the mistress was "at home"; and at my door, too, soon began the usual din of bell and knocker. Joe was quite equal to the occasion, and enjoyed Friday, the day I received. Dressed in his very best, and with a collar that kept his chin in what seemed to me a fearful state of torture, but added to his height by at least half an inch, Joe stood behind the hall door, ready to open it directly the knocker was released. He ushered in the guests as though "to the manner born," giving out the names correctly, and with all the ease of an experienced groom of the chambers.

The conservatory leading out of the drawing-room was Joe's especial pride, it was his great



pleasure to syringe the hanging baskets, and attend to the ferns and plants. Many shillings from his pocket-money was spent in little surprises for me in the form of pots of musk, maiden-hair, or anything he could buy; his wages were all sent home, and he only kept for his own whatever he had given to him, and sometimes a guest would "tip" him more generously than I liked, for his bright eyes and ready hands were always at everybody's service.

After my husband's return home, who from the first became Joe's especial care, as to boots, brushing of clothes, etc., it became necessary to give two or three dinner-parties, and I must confess I felt nervous as to how Joe would acquit himself.

In our dining-room was a very large bear-skin rug, and the floor being polished oak, it was dangerous to step on this rug, for it would slip away from the feet on the smooth surface, and even the dogs avoided it, so many falls had they met with upon it.

The first day of my husband's arrival, we had my sister and a friend to dine, and had been talking about Joe in the few moments before dinner.

My husband had been laughing at the size of my page, and scolding me a little, or rather pretending to do so, for taking a written character.

"Little woman," he said, "don't be surprised if



one night a few country burglars make us a visit, and renew their acquaintance with Mr. J. Cole."

"You don't know Joe," I replied, "or you would never say that."

"Do you know him so well, little wife?" said my dear sensible husband; "remember he has only been in our service six months. In the country he had very little of value in his hands, but here, it seems to me, he has too much. All the plate, and indeed everything of value, is in his pantry, and he is a very young boy to trust. One of the women servants should take charge of the plate-chest, I think. Where does this paragon sleep?"

"Downstairs," I said, "next the kitchen, at the back of the house, and you should see how carefully every night he looks to the plate-basket, counts everything, and then asks Mrs. Wilson to see it is right, locks it up, and gives her the key to take care of. No one can either open or carry away an iron safe easily, and there is nothing else worth taking; besides, I know Joe is honest, I feel it."

"Well, I hope so, dear," was my husband's reply; but I could see he was not quite comfortable about it.

At dinner that day Joe had an accident; he was dreadfully nervous as usual, and when waiting, he



forgot to attend to my guests first, but always came to me. The parlor-maid, a new one, and not a great favorite with Joe, made matters worse by correcting him in an audible voice; and once, when somebody wanted oyster sauce, she told Joe to hand it, the poor boy, wishing to obey quickly, forgot to give the bear-skin a wide berth, slipped on it, and in a moment had fallen full length, having in his fall deposited the contents of the sauce-tureen partly into a blue leather arm-chair, and the rest on my sister's back.

The boy's consternation was dreadful. I could see he was completely overcome with fright and sorrow for what he had done. He got up, and all his trembling lips could say was, "Oh, please, I'm so sorry; it was the bear as tripped me up. I am so very sorry."

Even my husband could scarcely keep from smiling, the sorrow was so genuine, the sense of shame so true.

"There, never mind, Joe," he said, kindly; "you must be more careful. Now run and get a sponge and do the best you can with it."

After that Joe had the greatest terror of that treacherous skin, and I heard him telling the parlor-maid about it.



"You mind," he said, "or that bear 'll ketch 'old of yer. I shan't forget how he ketched 'old of my leg that day and knocked me over; so you'd better take care, and not go nigher than you can 'elp. He's always a-lookin' out to ketch yer, but he won't 'ave me no more, I can tell him."

This fall of Joe's made him still more nervous of waiting at table, and at last when he had made some very serious mistakes, I had to speak to him and tell him I was afraid if he did not soon learn to wait better, I must send him away, for his master was annoyed at the mistakes he made, such as pouring port instead of sherry, giving cold plates when hot ones were required, handing dishes on the wrong side, etc.

My little lecture was listened to quietly and humbly, and Joe had turned to go away, when, to my surprise and distress, he suddenly burst into a perfect passion of tears and sobs.

I will try and learn myself," he said, as well as his sobs would let him, "indeed, I will. I know I'm stoopid. I sez to myself every time company comes, 'I'll mind wot I'm about, and remember dishes left-'anded, pourin's out right, sherry wine's yellor, and port wine afterwards with the nuts, grapes and things; and the cruits when there's fish,



and begin with the strangerest lady next to master's side, and 'elp missis last.' I knows it all, but when they're all sittin' down, and everybody wantin' somethin', I don't know if Jane's a-goin' to giv' it 'em, or I am, and I gets stoopid and my 'ands shakes, and somehow I can't do nothin'; but please don't send me away. I do like you and the master. I'll ask Jane to learn me better. You see if I don't. Oh, please 'm, say you'll try me!"

What could I say but "Yes"; and for a day or two Joe did better, but we were a small party, and the waiting was easy; but shortly we were to have a large dinner-party, and as the time drew near, Joe became quite pale and anxious.

About this time, too, I had been awakened at night by curious sounds downstairs, as of somebody moving about, and once I heard an unmistakable fall of some heavy article.

My husband assured me it was nothing alarming, and he went down stairs, but could neither hear nor see anything unusual. All was quiet.

Another night I felt sure I heard sounds downstairs, and in spite of my husband's advice to remain still, I called Mrs. Wilson and entreated her to come down to the kitchen floor with me. It was so very easy, I knew, for anybody to enter the house from



the back, and there being a deep area all round, they could work away with their tools at the ground floor back windows unseen. Any one could get on the top of the stable from the mews, drop into the garden, and be safe; for the watchman and policeman were on duty in the front of the house only; the back was quite unprotected. True, there were iron bars to Joe's window and the kitchen, but iron bars could be sawn through, and I lived in dread of burglars.

This night Mrs. Wilson and I went softly down, and as we neared the kitchen stairs I heard a voice say in a whisper, "Make haste!"

"There, Mrs. Wilson, did you hear that?" I said. "Was that imagination?"

"No, ma'am," she replied; "there's somebody talking, and I believe it's in Joe's room. Let us go up and fetch the master."

So we returned upstairs, and soon my husband stood with us at the door of Joe's room.

"Open the door, Joe!" cried my husband. "Who have you got there?"

"Nobody, please, sir," said a trembling voice.

"Open the door at once!" said the master, and in a moment it was opened. Joe stood there very pale, but with no sort of fear in his face. There was



nobody in the room, and as Joe had certainly been in bed, we concluded he must have talked in his sleep, and, perhaps, walked about also, for what we knew.

The day before the dinner-party, cook came and told me she felt sure there was something wrong with Joe. He was so changed from what he used to be; there was no getting him to wake in the morning, and he seemed so heavy with sleep, as if he had no rest at night. Also cook had proofs of his having been in her kitchen after he was supposed to have gone to bed; chairs were moved, and several things not where she had left them. She had asked Joe, and he replied he did go into the kitchen, but would not say what for.

I did not like to talk to Joe that day, so decided to wait till after the dinner, and I would then insist on the mystery being cleared up. I knew Joe would tell the truth; my trust was unshaken, although circumstances seemed against him.

That night Mrs. Wilson came to my door, and said she was sure Joe was at his night-work again, for she could see from her bedroom window a light reflected on the stable wall, which must be in his room.

"How can we find out," I said, "what he is doing?"



"That is easily done," said my husband. "We can go out at the garden door, and down the steps leading from the garden into the area; they are opposite his window. We can look through the venetian blinds, if they are down, and see for ourselves. He won't be able to see us."

Accordingly, having first wrapped up in our furs, we went down, and were soon at Joe's window, standing in the area that surrounded the house. The laths of the blind were some of them open, and between them we saw distinctly all over the room.

At first we could not understand the strange sight that met our gaze.

In the middle of Joe's room was a table, spread with a cloth, and on it saucers from flower-pots, placed at intervals down each side; before each saucer a chair was placed, and in the centre of the table a high basket, from which a Stilton cheese had been unpacked that morning; this was evidently to represent a tall *epergne*. On Joe's wash-stand were several bottles, a jug, and by each flower-pot saucer two vessels of some kind—by one, two jam-pots of different sizes; by another, a broken specimen glass and a tea-cup—and so on; and from chair to chair moved Joe, softly but quickly, on tip-toe, now with bottles which contained water; we



could see his lips move, and concluded he was saying something to imaginary persons, for he would put a jam-pot on his tray, and pour into it from the bottle, and then replace it. Sometimes he would go quickly to his bed, which we saw represented the dinner-waggon, or side-board, and bring imaginary dishes from there and hand them. Then he would go quickly from chair to chair, always correcting himself if he went to the wrong side, and talking all the time softly to himself. So here was the solution of the mystery: here melted into air the visions of Joe in league with midnight burglars.

The poor boy, evidently alarmed at the prospect of the dinner-party, and feeling that he must try to improve in waiting at table before that time somehow, had stolen all those hours nightly from his rest, to practise with whatever substitutes were at hand for the usual table requisites.

Here every night, when those who had worked far less during the day were soundly sleeping, had that anxious, striving little heart shaken off fatigue, and the big blue eyes refused to yield to sleep, in order to fight with the nervousness that alone prevented his willing hands acting with their natural cleverness. I felt a choking in my throat, when I saw the thin, pale little face, that should have been



on the pillow hours before, lighted up with triumph as the supposed guests departed, the dumb show of folding the dinner napkins belonging to myself and the master, and putting them in their respective rings, told us the ordeal was over. What a weird scene it was! The dim light, the silent house, the spread table, and the empty chairs. One could imagine ghostly revellers, visible only to that one fragile attendant, who ministered so willingly to their numerous wants. The sort of nervous thrill that heralds hysterical attacks was rapidly overcoming me, and I whispered to my husband, "Let us go now;" but he lingered yet a few seconds, and silently drew my attention again to the window.

Joe was on his knees by his bed-side, his face hidden in his hands. What silent prayer was ascending to the Throne of Grace, who shall say? I only know that it were well if many a kneeling worshipper in "purple and fine linen" could feel as sure of being heard as Joe did when, his victory won, he knelt, in his humble servant's garb, and said his prayers that night in spite of the aching head and weary limbs that needed so badly the few hours' rest that remained before six o'clock, the time Joe always got up.

Silently we stole away, and in my mind from that



moment my faith in Joe never wavered. Not once, in spite of sad events that came to pass later on, when even I, his staunchest friend, had to recall to memory that kneeling little form in the silence of the night, alone with his God, in order to stifle the cruel doubts of his truth that were forced upon us all by circumstances I must soon relate.

The famous dinner passed off well. Joe was splendid; his midnight practice had brought its reward, and he moved about so swiftly, and anticipated everybody's wants so well, that some of my friends asked me where I got such a treasure of a page; he must have had a good butler or footman to teach him, they said; he is evidently used to waiting on many guests. I was proud of Joe.

The next day he came to me with more than a sovereign in silver, and told me the gentlemen had been so very kind to him, "and a'most every one had given him somethin', tho' he never arst, or waited about, as some fellers did, as if they wouldn't lose sight of a gent till he paid 'em. But," said Joe, "they would giv' it me; and one gent, he follered me right up the passage, he did, and sez, 'Ere, you small boy,' he sez, and he give me a whole 'arf-crown. Whatever for, I don't know."

But I knew that must have been Dr. Loring, a



celebrated physician, and my husband's dearest friend. We had told him about Joe's midnight self-teaching, and he had been much interested in the story.

You little thought, Joe, the hand that patted your curly head so kindly that night would one day hold your small wrist and count its feeble pulse beating slowly and yet more slowly, while we, who loved you, should watch the clever, handsome face, trying in vain to read there the blessed word "Hope."







## CHAPTER IV.

And now I must confess to those—for surely there will be a few—who have felt a little interest so far, in the fortunes of J. Cole, that a period in my story has arrived when I would fain lay down my pen, and not awaken the sleeping past, to recall the sad trouble that befell him.

I am almost an old woman now, and all this happened many years ago, when my hair was golden instead of silver. I was younger in those days, and now am peacefully and hopefully waiting God's good time for my summons. Troubles have been my lot, many and hard to bear. Loss of husband, children, dear, good friends, many by death, and some troubles harder even than those, the loss of trust, and bitter awakening to the ingratitude and worthlessness of those in whom I have trusted. All these I have endured. Yet time and trouble have not sufficiently hardened my heart that I can write of what follows without pain.



Christmas was over, and my dear husband again away for some months. As soon as I could really say, "Spring is here," we were to leave London for our country home, and Joe was constantly talking to Mrs. Wilson about his various pets, left behind in the gardener's care. There was an old jackdaw, an especial favorite of his, a miserable owl, too, who had met with an accident, resulting in the loss of an eye; a more evil-looking object than "Cyclops," as my husband christened him, I never saw. Sometimes on a dark night this one eye would gleam luridly from out the shadowy recesses of the garden, and an unearthly cry of "Hoo-oo-t," fall on the ear, enough to give one the "creeps for a hour," as Mary, the housemaid, said. But Joe loved Cyclops, or rather "Cloppy," as he called him, and the bird hopped after Joe about the garden, as if he quite returned the feeling.

All our own dogs, and two or three maimed ones, and a cat or two, more or less hideous, and indebted to Joe's mercy in rescuing them from traps, snares, etc.—all these creatures were Joe's delight. Each week the gardener's boy wrote a few words to Joe of their health and wonderful doings, and each week Joe faithfully sent a shilling, to be laid out in food for them. Then there was Joe's especial garden,



also a sort of hospital, or convalescent home rather, where many blighted, unhealthy-looking plants and shrubs, discarded by the gardener, and cast aside to be burnt on the weed heap, had been rescued by Joe, patiently nursed and petted as it were into life again by constant care and watching, and after being kept in pots awhile, till they showed, by sending forth some tiny shoot or bud, that the sap of life was once more circulating freely, were then planted in the sheltered corner he called "his own."

What treasures awaited him in this small square of earth. What bunches of violets he would gather for the Missis; and his longing to get back to his various pets, and his garden, was the topic of conversation on many a long evening between Joe and Mrs. Wilson.

Little Bogie, the fox terrier, was the only dog we had with us in town, and Bogie hated London. After the quiet country life, the incessant roll of carriages, tramping of horses, and callings of coachmen, shrill cab whistles, and all the noises of a fashionable neighborhood at night during a London season, were most objectionable to Bogie; he could not rest, and often Joe got out of bed in the night, and took him in his arms, to prevent his waking all of us, with his shrill barking at the unwonted sounds.



As I have said before, I am very nervous, and the prospect of spending several more weeks in the big London house, without my husband, was far from pleasant; so I invited my widowed sister and her girls to stay with me some time longer, and made up my mind to banish my fears, and think of nothing but that the dark nights would be getting shorter and shorter, and meanwhile our house was well protected, as far as good strong bolts and chains could do so.

One night I felt more nervous than usual. I had expected a letter from America for some days past, and none had arrived. On this evening I knew the mail was due, and I waited anxiously for the last ring of the postman at ten o'clock; but I was doomed to listen in vain; there was the sharp, loud ring next door, but not at ours, and I went to my room earlier than the others, really to give way to a few tears which I could not control.

I sat by my bedroom fire, thinking, and I am afraid, conjuring up all sorts of terrible reasons for my dear husband's silence, until I must have fallen asleep, for I awoke chilly and cramped from the uncomfortable posture I had slept in. The fire was out, and the house silent as the grave; not even a carriage passing to take up some late guest. I



looked at the clock—half-past three, and then from my window. It was that “darkest hour before dawn,” and I hurried into bed, and endeavored to sleep; but no, I was hopelessly wide awake; no amount of counting, or mental exercise on the subject of “sheep going through a hedge,” had any effect, and I found myself lying awake, listening. Yes, I knew that I was *listening for something that I should hear before long, but I did not know what.*

“Hark! what was that?” a sudden thud, as if something had fallen somewhere in the house; then silence, except for the loud beating of my heart, that threatened to suffocate me. “Nonsense,” I said to myself, “I am foolishly nervous to-night. It is nothing here, or Bogie would bark;” so I tried again to sleep. Hush! Surely that was a footstep going up or down the stairs! I could not endure the agony of being alone any longer, but would go to my sister’s room, just across the landing, and get her to come and stay the rest of the night with me. I put on my slippers and dressing-gown, and opening my door, came face to face with my sister, who was coming to me.

“Let me come in,” she said, “and don’t let us alarm the girls, but I feel certain something is going



on downstairs. Bogie barked furiously an hour ago, and then was suddenly silent."

"That must have been when I was asleep," I replied; "but no doubt Joe heard him, and has taken him in."

"That may be," said my sister, "but I have kept on hearing queer noises at the back of the house; they seemed in Joe's room at first. Come and listen yourself on the stairs."

It is strange, but true, that many persons, horribly nervous at the thought of danger, find all their presence of mind in full force when actually called upon to face it. So it is with me, and so it was on that night. I stood on the landing, and listened, and in a few moments heard muffled sounds downstairs, like persons moving about stealthily.

"There is certainly somebody down there, Nelly," I said to my sister, "and they are down in the basement. If we could creep down quietly and get into the drawing-room, we might open the window and call the watchman or policeman; both are on duty until seven."

"But think," said my sister, "of the fright of the girls if they hear us, and find they are left alone. The servants, too, will scream, and rush about, as they always do. Let us go down and make sure



there are thieves, and then see what is best to be done. The door at the top of the kitchen stairs is locked, so they must be down there; and perhaps if we could get the watchman to come in quietly, we might catch them in a trap, by letting him through the drawing-room, and into the conservatory. He could get into the garden from there, and as they must have got in that way from the mews over the stable wall, and through the garden, they would try to escape the same way, and the watchman would be waiting for them, and cut off their retreat."

I agreed, and we stole downstairs into the drawing-room, where we locked ourselves in, then very gently and carefully drew up one of the side blinds of the bay window. The morning had begun to break, and everything in the wide road was distinctly visible. In the distance I could see the policeman on duty, but on the opposite side, and going away from our house instead of towards it. He would turn the corner at the top of the road, and go past the houses parallel with the backs of our row, and then appear at the opposite end of the park, and come along our side; there was no intermediate turning—nothing but an unbroken row of about forty detached houses facing each other.



What could we do? I dared not wait until the policeman came back; quite twenty minutes must pass before then, and day being so near at hand, the light was increasing every moment, and the burglars would surely not leave without visiting the drawing-room and dining-room, and would perhaps murder us, to save themselves from detection.

If I could only attract the policeman's attention, but how?

My sister was close to the door listening, and every instant we dreaded hearing them coming up the kitchen stairs. I could not understand Bogie not barking, and Joe not waking, for where I was I could distinctly hear the men moving about in the pantry and kitchen.

"I wonder," I said to my sister, "if I could put something across from this balcony to the stonework by the front steps? It seems such a little distance, and if I could step across, I could open the front gate in an instant, and run after the policeman. I shall try."

"You will fall and kill yourself," my sister said; "the space is much wider than you think."

But I was determined to try, for if I let that policeman go out of sight, what horrors might happen in the twenty minutes before he would come back.



The idea of one of the girls waking and calling out, or Joe waking and being shot or stabbed, gave me a feeling of desperation, as though I alone could and must save them.

Luckily the house was splendidly built, every window-sash sliding noiselessly and easily in its groove. I opened the one nearest to the hall-door steps, and saw that the stone ledge abutted to within about two feet of the low balcony of the window; but I was too nervous to trust myself to spring across even that distance. At that moment my sister whispered:

"I hear somebody coming up the kitchen stairs!"

Desperately I cast my eyes round the room for something to bridge the open space that would bear my weight, if only for a moment. The fender-stool caught my eye; that might do, it was strong, and more than long enough. In an instant we had it across, and I was out of the window and down the front steps.

As I turned the handle of the heavy iron gate, I looked down at the front kitchen window. A man stood in the kitchen, and he looked up and saw me—such a horrible-looking ruffian, too. Fear lent wings to my feet, and I flew up the road, the watchman was just entering the park from the opposite



end, he saw me, and sounded his whistle; the policeman turned and ran towards me. I was too exhausted to speak, and he caught me, just as, having gasped "Thieves at 50!" (the number of our house), I fell forward in a dead swoon.

When I recovered I was lying on my own bed, my sister, the scared servants, and the policeman, all around me. From them I heard that directly the man in the kitchen caught sight of me, he warned his companion, who was busy forcing the lock of the door at the head of the kitchen stairs, and my sister heard them both rushing across the garden, where they had a ladder against the stable-wall. They must have pulled this up after them, and tossed it into the next garden, where it was found, to delay pursuit. The park-keeper had, after sounding his whistle, rushed to our house, got in at the window, and ran to the door at the top of the kitchen stairs, but it was quite impossible to open it; the burglars had cleverly left something in the lock when disturbed, and the key would not turn. He then went through the drawing-room into the conservatory, where a glass door opened on the garden, but by the time the heavy sliding glass panel was unfastened, and the inner door unbolted, the men had disappeared; they took with them



much less than they hoped to have done, for there were parcels and packets of spoons, forks, and a case of very handsome gold salt cellars, a marriage gift, always kept in a baize-lined chest in the pantry, the key of which I retained, and which chest was supposed until now to be proof against burglars; the lock had been burnt all round with some instrument, most likely a poker heated in the gas, and then forced inwards from the burnt woodwork.

"How was it," I asked, "Joe did not wake during all this, or Bogie bark?"

As I asked the question, I noticed that my sister turned away, and Mrs. Wilson, after vainly endeavoring to look unconcerned, threw her apron suddenly over her head, and burst out crying.

"What is the matter?" I said, sitting up; "what are you all hiding from me? Send Joe to me; I will learn the truth from him."

At this the policeman came forward, and then I heard that Joe was missing, his room was in great disorder, and one of his shoes, evidently dropped in his hurry, had been found in the garden, near some spoons thrown down by the thieves; his clothes were gone, so he evidently had dressed himself after pretending to go to bed as usual; his blankets and sheets were taken away, used no



doubt, the policeman said, to wrap up the stolen things.

"Is it possible," I asked, "that you suspect Joe is in league with these burglars?"

"Well, mum," said the man, "it looks queer, and very like it. He slept downstairs close to the very door where they got in; he never gives no alarm, he must have been expecting something, or else why was he dressed? And how did his shoe come in the garden? And what's more to the point, if so be as he's innercent, where is he? These young rascals is that artful, you'd be surprised to know the dodges they're up to."

"But," I interrupted, "it is impossible, it is cruel to suspect him. He is gone, true enough, but I'm sure he will come back. Perhaps he ran after the men to try and catch them, and dropped his shoe then."

"That's not likely, mum," said he, with a pitying smile at my ignorance of circumstantial evidence; "he'd have called out to stop 'em, and it ain't likely they'd have let him get up their ladder, afore chucking of it into the next garden, if so be as he was a-chasing of 'em to get 'em took. No, mar'm; I'm very sorry, particular as you seem so kindly disposed; but, in my humble opinion, he's a artful



young dodger, and this 'ere job has been planned ever so long, and he's connived at it, and has hooked it along with his pals. I knows 'em, but we'll soon nab him; and if so be as you'll be so kind as to let me take down in writin' all you knows about 'J. Cole,' which is his name, I'm informed—where you took him from, his character, and previous career, it will help considerable in laying hands on him; and when he's found we'll soon find his pals."

Of course, I told all I knew about Joe. I felt positive he would come back, perhaps in a few minutes, to explain everything. Besides, there was Bogie, too. Why should he take Bogie? The policeman suggested that "perhaps the dawg foller'd him, and he had taken it along with him, to prevent being traced by its means."

At length, all this questioning being over, the household settled down into a sort of strange calm. It seemed to us days since we had said "Good night," and sought our rooms on that night, and yet it was only twenty-four hours ago; in that short time how much had taken place! On going over all the plate, etc., we missed many more things; and Mrs. Wilson, whose faith in Joe's honesty never wavered, began to think the poor boy might have been frightened at having slept through the rob-



bery; and as he was so proud of having the plate used every day in his charge, when he discovered it had been stolen, he might have feared we should blame him so much for it, that he had run away home to his people in his fright, meaning to ask his father, or his adored Dick, to return to me and plead for him. I thought, too, this was possible, for I knew how terribly he would reproach himself for letting anything in his care be stolen. I therefore made up my mind to telegraph to his father at once; but not to alarm him, I said—

“Is Joe with you? Have reason to think he has gone home. Answer back.”

The answer came some hours after, for in those small villages communication was difficult. The reply ran thus:—

“We have not seen Joe; if he comes to-night will write at once. Hoping there is nothing wrong.”

So that surmise was a mistake, for Joe had money, and would go by train if he went home, and be there in two hours.

All the household sat up nearly all that night, or rested uncomfortably on sofas and arm-chairs; we felt too unsettled to go to bed, though worn out with suspense, and the previous excitement and



fright. Officials and detectives came and went during the evening, and looked about for traces of the robbers, and before night a description of the stolen things, and a most minute one of Joe, were posted outside the police-stations, and all around London for miles. A reward of twenty pounds was offered for Joe, and my heart ached to know there was a hue and cry after him like a common thief.

What would the old parents think? and how would Dick feel?—Dick, whose good counsels and careful training had made Joe what I *knew* he was, in spite of every suspicion.

The next day I still felt sure he would come, and I went down into the room where he used to sleep, and saw Mrs. Wilson had put all in order, and fresh blankets and sheets were on the little bed, all ready for him. So many things put me in mind of the loving, gentle disposition. A little flower vase I valued very much had been broken by Bogie romping with one of my nieces, and knocking it down. It was broken in more than twenty pieces; and after I had patiently tried to mend it myself, and my nieces, with still greater patience, had had their turn at it, we had given it up as a bad job, and thought it had long ago gone onto the dust-heap.



There were some shelves on the wall of Joe's room where his treasures were kept, and on one of these shelves, covered with an old white handkerchief, was a little tray containing the vase, a bottle of cement, and camel's-hair brush. The mending was finished, all but two or three of the smallest pieces, and beautifully done; it must have taken time, and an amount of patience that put my efforts and those of the girls to shame; but Joe's was a labor of love, and did not weary him. He would probably have put it in its usual place one morning, when mended, and said nothing about it until I found it out, and then confessed, in his own queer way, "Please, I knew you was sorry it was broke, and so I mended it;" then he would have hurried away, flushed with pleasure at my few words of thanks and praise.

On the mantelpiece were more of Joe's treasures—four or five cheap photographs, the subjects quite characteristic of Joe. One of them was a religious subject, "The Shepherd with a little lamb on his shoulders." A silent prayer went up from my heart that somewhere that same Good Shepherd was finding lost Joe, and bringing him safely back to us.



There were some pebbles he had picked up during a memorable trip to Margate with Dick, a year before I saw him; which pebbles he firmly believed were real "aggits," and had promised to have them polished soon, and made into brooch and earrings for Mrs. Wilson.

There was a very old-fashioned photograph of myself that I had torn in half, and thrown into the waste-paper basket. I saw this had been carefully joined together and enclosed in a cheap frame—the only one that could boast of being so preserved. I suppose Joe could only afford one frame, and his sense of the fitness of things made him choose the Missis's picture to be first honored.

How sad I felt looking round the room! People may smile at my feeling so sad and concerned about a servant, a common, low-born page-boy. Aye, smile on, if you will, but tell me, my friend, can you say, if you were in Joe's position at that time, with circumstantial evidence so strong against you, poor and lowly as he was, are there four or five, or even two or three of your friends who would believe in you, stand up for you, and trust in you, in spite of all, as we did for Joe?

I had gone up to my sitting-room, after telling Mary to light the fire in poor Joe's room, and let it



look warm and cosy, for I had some sort of presentiment that I should see the poor boy again very soon—how I knew not, but I have all my life been subject to spiritual influences, and have seldom been mistaken in them.

We were all thinking of going early to rest, for since the robbery, none of us had had any real sleep. Suddenly the front door bell rang timidly, as if the visitor were not quite sure of it's being right to pull the handle.

"Perhaps that's Joe," said my sister.

But I knew Joe would not ring that bell.

We heard Mary open the door, and a man's voice ask if Mr. Aylmer lived there.

"Yes," said Mary, "but he is abroad, but you can see Mrs. Aylmer."

Then came a low murmuring of voices, and Mary came in, saying:

"Oh, ma'am, it's Dick, Joe's brother; and he says may he see you?"

"Send him in here at once," I replied.

And in a moment Dick stood before me; Dick, Joe's beau-ideal of all that was good, noble, and to be admired. I must say the mind-picture I had formed of Dick was totally unlike the reality. I had



expected to see a sunburnt big fellow, with broad shoulders and expressive features.

The real Dick was a thin, delicate-looking young man, with a pale face, and black straight hair. He stood with his hat in his hand, looking down as if afraid to speak.

"Oh, pray come in," I cried, going forward to meet him. "I know who you are. Oh, have you brought me any news of poor Joe? We are all his friends here, his true friends, and you must let us be yours too in this trouble. Have you seen him?"

At my words the bowed head was lifted up, and then I saw Dick's face as it was. If ever truth, honor, and generosity looked out from the windows of a soul, they looked out of those large blue eyes of Dick's—eyes so exactly like Joe's in expression, that the black lashes instead of the fair ones seemed wrong somehow.

"God bless you, lady, for them words," said Dick; and before I could prevent it, he had knelt at my feet, caught my hand and pressed it to his lips, while wild sobs broke from him.

"Forgive me," he said, rising to his feet, and leaning with one hand on the back of a chair, his whole frame shaking with emotion. "Forgive me



for givin' way like this; but I've seen them papers about our Joe, and I know what's being thought of him, and I've come here ashamed to see you, thinkin' you believed as the rest do, that Joe robbed you after all your goodness to him. Why, lady, I tell you rather than I'd believe that of my little lad, as I thrashed till my heart almost broke to hear him sob, for the only lie as he ever told in all his life; if I could believe it, I'd take father's old gun and end my life, for I'd be a beast, not fit to live any longer. And I thought you doubted him too; but now I hear you say you're his friend, and believes in him, and don't think he robbed you, I know now there's good folks in the world, and there's mercy and justice, and it ain't all wrong, as I'd come a'most to think as it was, when I first know'd about this 'ere."

"Sit down, Dick," I said, "and recover yourself, and let us see what can be done. I will tell you all that has happened, and then perhaps you can throw some light on Joe's conduct—you who know him so well."

Dick sat down, and shading his eyes with his hand that his tears might not betray his weakness any more, he listened quietly while I went over all the events of that dreadful night.



When I had finished Dick sat for some moments quite silent, then with a weary gesture passing his hand across his forehead, he remarked sadly.

"I can't make nothing of it; it's a thing beyond my understanding. I'm that dazed like, I can't see nothin' straight. However, what I've got to do is to find Joe, and that I mean to do; if he's alive I'll find him, and then let him speak for hisself. I don't believe he's done nothing wrong, but if he has done ever so little or ever so much, he'll *'own up to it whatever it is,'* that's what Joe'll do. I told him to lay by them words and hold to 'em, and I'll lay my life he'll do as I told him. I've got a bed down Marylebone way, at my aunt's what's married to a policeman; I'm to stay there, and I'll have a talk with 'em about this and get some advice. I know Joe's innercent, and why don't he come and say so? But I'll find him."

I inquired about the old people, and how they bore their trial.

"Father 's a'most beside hisself," said Dick; "and only that he's got to keep mother in the dark about this, he'd have come with me; but mother, she's a-bed with rheumatics, and Doctor told father her heart was weak like, and she mustn't be told, or it would p'raps kill her. She thinks a deal of Joe,



does mother, being the youngest, and always such a sort of lovin' little chap he were." And here Dick's voice broke again, and I made him go down to Mrs. Wilson, and have some refreshment before leaving, and he promised to see me again the first thing in the morning, when he had talked to his friend, the policeman.

Scarcely had Dick gone, when a loud, and this time firm ring, announced another visitor, and in a cab too, I could hear. Evidently there was no going to rest early that night, as ten o'clock was then striking.

Soon, to my surprise, I heard a well-known voice, and Mary announced Dr. Loring—my husband's old friend, of whom I have already spoken.

"Well, my dear," he cried, in his pleasant, cheerful voice, that in itself seemed to lift some of the heaviness from my heart, "are you not astonished to see me at such an hour?"

"Astonished, certainly," I replied; "but very, very glad. You are always welcome; and more than ever now, when we are in trouble and sorrow. Do sit down, and stay with me a while."

"Yes, I will, for an hour, gladly," he said. "But there's something outside that had better be brought in first. You know I've only just arrived from



Devonshire, and there are two barrels of Devonshire apples on that cab, one for you, and one for the wife; that is why you see me here; for I thought it would not be ten minutes out of my road to pass by here and leave them with you, and so save the trouble of sending them by carrier to-morrow."

I rang for Mary, and the Doctor suggested the apples being put somewhere where the smell of them could not penetrate upstairs; for, as he truly remarked, "though a fine ripe pippin is delicious to eat at breakfast or luncheon, the smell of them shut up in a house is horrible."

"I dare say Mrs. Wilson will find a place in the basement," I said, "for we don't use half the room there is down there."

Having ordered the barrel to be stowed away, I soon settled my visitor comfortably in an arm-chair by the fire, with a cup of his favorite cocoa by his side.

"And now, my dear," said he, "tell me about this burglary that has taken place, and which has made you look as if you wanted me to take care of you awhile, and bring back some color to your pale cheeks. And what about this boy? Is it the same queer little fellow who chose midnight to play his



pranks in once before? I'm not often deceived in a face, and I thought his was an honest one. I——"

"So it was," I interrupted; "don't say a word until I've told you all, and you will ——"

I had scarcely begun speaking, when a succession of the most fearful screams arose from downstairs, each rising louder and louder, in the extreme of terror. My sister, who had gone to her room, rushed down to me; the girls, in their dressing-gowns, just as they were preparing for bed, followed, calling out, "Auntie! O, Auntie! what is it? Who is screaming? What can be the matter?" Hardly were they in the room when Mary rushed in, ghastly, her eyes staring, and, in a voice hoarse with terror, gasped out, "Come! come! he's found! he's murdered! I saw him. He's lying in the cellar, with his throat cut. Oh, it's horrible!" Then she began to scream again.

The Doctor tried to hold me back; but I broke from him, and ran downstairs, where I could find no one; all was dark in the kitchens, but there was a light in the area, and I was soon there, followed by Doctor Loring.

By the open cellar door stood Mrs. Wilson, and the cabman with her. Directly she saw me, she called out, "Oh, dear mistress, don't you come



here; it's not a sight for you. Take her away, Doctor Loring, she musn't see it."

"What is it?" I cried; "Mary says it's ——" I could not say the words, but seizing the candle from Mrs. Wilson's hand, I went into the cellar.

The good Doctor was close to me, with more light, by the aid of which we beheld, in the far corner, facing us, what seemed to be a bundle of blankets, from which protruded a head, a horrible red stream surrounding it, and flowing, as it were, from the open mouth. One second brought me close. It was Joe—Joe, with his poor limbs bound with cruel ropes, and in his mouth for a gag they had forced one of those bright red socks he would always wear. Thank God, it was only that red sock, and not the horrible red stream I had feared. He was dead, of course; but not such a fearful death as that.

The Doctor soon pulled the horrid gag from his mouth, and the good-natured cabman, who evidently felt for us, helped to cut the ropes, and lift up the poor cold little form.

As they lifted him, something that was in the blankets fell heavily to the ground. It was poor Bogie's dead body, stabbed in many places, each wound enough to have let out the poor dumb creature's life



By this time help had arrived, and once more the police took possession of us, as it were.

Of course, *now* everything was explained. The burglars had evidently entered Joe's room, and Bogie, being in his arms, had barked, and awakened him. A few blows had soon silenced poor Bogie, and a gag and cords had done the same for Joe.

When the man saw me from the kitchen window he must have known that help would soon come, and to prevent Joe giving information too soon they had hastily seized him, bed-clothes and all, and put him into that cellar, to starve, if he were not discovered.

Perhaps they did not really mean to kill the poor child, and if we had been in the habit of using that cellar we might have found him in a few hours or less; but, unfortunately, it was a place we never used, it reached far under the street, and was too large for our use. Our coal-cellar was a much smaller one, inside the scullery; the door of poor Joe's prison closed with a common latch.

Had there been any doubt in the detective's mind as to Joe's guilt he might have taken more trouble, and searched for him, even there; but from the first everybody but ourselves had been sure Joe had



escaped with the burglars, so the cellar remained unsearched.

Mrs. Wilson, wishing to spare me the smell of the apples, thought that cellar, being outside the house, a very suitable place for them, and on opening the door had caught sight of something in the distant corner, and sent Mary to see what it was. Then arose those fearful shrieks we had heard, and Mary had rushed out of the cellar half mad with fright.

In less time than it has taken me to relate this, Joe was laid on the rug before the drawing-room fire, and I summoned courage to look on the changed face.

"Could that be Joe—so white, so drawn, so still?"

Doctor Loring was kneeling by the little form, chafing and straightening the poor stiffened arms, so bent with their cruel pinioning behind the shoulders.

"Doctor," I said, "why do you do any more? Nothing can bring back the poor fellow, murdered while doing his duty." Then I, too, knelt down, and took the poor cold hands in mine.

"Oh, my poor child!" I cried, "my little brave heart; who dared say you were false? Let those



who doubted you look at you now, with dry eyes, if they can."

"My dear," said Dr. Loring, suddenly, "have you always hot water in your bath-room?"

"Yes, Doctor," I said; "yes. Why do you ask? Do you mean—is it possible—there is life?" And I took Joe's little head in my arms, and forgot he was only a servant, only a poor, common little page-boy. I only know I pressed him to my breast, and called him by all the endearing names I used to call my own children in after years, when God gave me some, and kissed his white forehead in my joy at the blessed ray of hope.

No want of willing arms to carry Joe upstairs. Mrs. Wilson had the bath filled before the Doctor was in the room with his light burden.

"A few drops of brandy, to moisten the lips, first of all," said the good Doctor, "then the bath and gentle friction; there is certainly life in him."

Now, my good sister's clever nursing proved invaluable. All that night we fought every inch of ground, as it were, with our grim enemy; the dear, good Doctor never relaxing in his efforts to bring back life to the cramped limbs. The burglars had unknowingly helped to keep alight Joe's feeble spark of life by wrapping the blankets round him;



they had meant, no doubt, to stifle any sound he might make; but by keeping him from actual contact with the stone floor, and protecting him from the cold, they had given him his little chance of life.

Oh, how I blessed that kind thought of Dr. Loring's to bring me a barrel of apples! Had there been no occasion to open the cellar-door, Joe would have died before another morning had dawned, died! starved!! What a horrible death! And to know that within a few steps were food, warmth, and kind hearts—hearts even then saddened by his absence, and grieving for him. What hours of agony he must have passed in the cold and darkness, hearing the footsteps of passers-by above his living tomb, and feeling the pangs of hunger and thirst. What weeks those three days must have seemed to him in their fearful darkness, until insensibility mercifully came to his aid, and hushed his senses to oblivion.

Morning was far advanced when, at last, Joe's eyelids began to flutter, and his eyes opened a very little, to close again immediately; even the subdued light we had let into the room being too much for him to bear after so long a darkness; but in that brief glance he had recognized me, and seeing his lips move, I bent my head close to them.



Only a faint murmuring came, but I distinguished the words:

"Missis, I couldn't 'elp it! Forgive me. Say 'Our Father.'"

I knelt down, and as well as I could for the tears that almost choked me, repeated that most simple, yet all-satisfying petition to the Throne of Grace.

Meanwhile the Doctor held Joe's wrist, and my sister, at a sign from him, put a few drops of nourishment between the pale lips.

"My dear," at length said the Doctor, "did you say the boy's brother was in London?"

"Yes," I replied, "but I have no address, as I expect him here this morning."

"That is well; he may be in time."

"In time?" I repeated; "in time for what? Is he dying? Can nothing be done?"

The good Doctor looked again with moistened eyes on the little white face, and said sadly—

"I fear not, but the sight of this brother he seems to have such a strong love for may rouse him for awhile. As it is, he is sinking fast. I can do no more; he is beyond human skill; but love and God's help may yet save him. Poor little fellow, he has done his duty nobly, and even to die doing *that* is an enviable fate; but we want such boys as this to live, and show others the way."



There was a slight sound at the room door, and on turning round I saw Dick—Dick with wild, dumb entreaty in his eyes.

I pointed to the bed, and with a whispered “Hush!” beckoned him to enter.

The shock of seeing his loved little lad so changed was too much for even his man’s courage, for with a cry he in vain strove to smother he sunk on his knees with his face hidden in his hands.

But only for a moment he let his grief overcome him; then rising, he took Joe’s little form in his arms, and in a voice to which love gave the softest and gentlest tones said—

“Joe, lad! Joe, little chap! here’s Dick. Look at poor old Dick. Don’t you know him? Don’t go away without sayin’ good-bye to Dick wot loves you.”

Slowly a little fluttering smile parted the lips, and the blue eyes unclosed once more. “Dick!” he gasped; “I wanted to tell you, Dick, but—I—can’t. I—ain’t—forgot. ‘Own—up—to—it—wot-ever’—I minded it all. Kiss me—Dick. God—bless—missis. Dick—take me—home—to—mother!”

And with a gentle sigh, in the arms of the brother he loved, Joe fell into a deep sleep, a sleep



from which we all feared he would no more awake on earth, and we watched him, fearing almost to move.

Dick held him in his arms all that morning, and presently towards noon the Doctor took the little wrist and found the pulse still feebly beating; a smile lit up his good, kind face, and he whispered to me, "There is hope."

"Thank God!" I whispered back, and ran away into my own room to sob out grateful prayers of thanksgiving to heaven for having spared the life so nearly lost to us.

When I went back, Joe had just begun to awaken, and was looking up into his beloved Dick's face, murmuring—"Why, it's Dick. Are you a-cryin' about *me*, Dick? Don't cry—I'm all right—I'm only so tired."

And having drank some wine the Doctor had ordered should be given him, he nestled close to Dick's breast, and again fell into a sweet sleep, a better, life-giving sleep this time, for the faint color came to his pale little lips, and presently Dick laid him down on the pillows, and rested his own weary arms. He would not move from Joe's side for fear he might wake and miss him, but for many



hours our little fellow slept peacefully, and so gradually came back to life.

We never quite knew the particulars of the robbery, for when Joe was well enough to talk we avoided speaking of it. Dr. Loring said, "The boy only partly remembers it, like a dream, and it is better he should forget it altogether; he will do so as he gets stronger. Send him home to his mother for awhile, and if he returns to you, let it be to the country house where there is nothing to remind him of all this."

Joe did get strong, and came back to us, but no longer as a page-boy; he was under-gardener, and his time was spent among his favorite flowers and pet animals, until one day Dick wrote to say his father had bought more land to be laid out in gardens, and if Joe could be spared he and Dick could work together, and in time set up for themselves in the business.

So Joe left us, but not to forget us, or be forgotten. On each anniversary of my birthday, I find a bunch of magnificent roses on my breakfast table—"With J. and R. Cole's respectful duty," and I know the sender is a fine strong young market-gardener; but sometimes I look back a few years, and instead of the lovely roses, and the big, healthy



giver, I seem to see a faded dusty bunch of wild flowers, held towards me by the little hot hand of a tired child with large blue eyes, and I hear a timid voice say—"Please 'm, it's J. Cole; and I've come to stay with yer!"

**THE END.**



## THE GOLDEN GATE.

### A LEGEND.

ONCE upon a time there were two little girls who lived within a quarter of a mile of each other, in an old German city. They were of the same age and both had golden hair and eyes as blue as the summer's sky. Fleeta's hair hung in wavy curls, and, when she was in a good humor, the blue sky in her eyes fairly sparkled with light. Gretchen's hair, on the contrary, cropped out in short, unequal lengths from under her close-fitting cap, and the blue beneath her lashes was dimmed by suffering and care. Fleeta was rich ; she dwelt in a beautiful house, was idolized by her parents, and gratified in every whim. Gretchen was poor, lived alone with her invalid mother in a bare garret, and hardly knew the meaning of play. Fleeta had exquisite toys in abundance, and great big dolls with real, flaxen hair, dressed in gay silks and laces. She often was taken to grand concerts,



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and many a time the rarest music floated through her father's house. She had beautiful clothes, too, and, for a pet, the loveliest little white dog in the world, which she led by a bright ribbon fastened around his neck. Sometimes the little fellow would wish to lie still, for Fleeta gave him so much cake and sugar he grew fat and lazy : but she would jerk him and make him follow her, for was he not *her* dog? And if the ribbon choked him, she thought—it certainly was his own fault.

Now Gretchen had only a poor wooden doll which she had picked up in the street. It had no flaxen hair, for the simple reason that the top of its head was gone ; and no fine silk dresses either, for it had come into her possession naked ; and naked it always remained, except when, on bitter cold nights, she would press it closely to her, as she lay on her straw in the corner, and wind her scanty covering about its stiff little limbs. *Her* music, on week-days, came from a strange square box, which she sometimes met with in the street. A dark-faced man with a long beard and round brass ear-rings, would turn its handle, and straightway the sounds would come pouring out of it. If it happened to visit the street where Fleeta lived, and halt near her curtained window, she would



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shudder at the "horrid noise," and beg her maid to close the sash.

But Gretchen did not shudder when the organ-man came into the alley where she lived. No, she would listen to it with parted lips, sure that some blessed spirit was within, trying to make itself known. Sometimes the box would be large and high, and in its upper portion she could see stiff little men and women bobbing up and down toward each other, or turning solemnly to the music, in a measured waltz.

On such occasions, Gretchen felt herself to be among the favored of the earth ; and when the organ-man had walked away further than she dared follow, she would run up the rickety stairs to describe to her mother all she had heard and seen. Then the poor, worn woman would smile for a moment and find comfort in her little girl's joy.

Gretchen's clothes, unlike Fleeta's, were very scanty, and of the coarsest stuffs ; and for a pet she had only a poor lame kitten, which she had rescued from some cruel boys. The kitten, weak and hungry as it was, needed no bright ribbon to make it follow her ; she led it by the cord of kindness, and though poor pussy often had only a soft caress and a gentle word for its supper, it knew well enough at such times



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that Gretchen's own porringer must be empty also.

Fleeta had troops of friends, and often went to gay parties, where the girls danced gracefully, and swung their beautiful dresses daintily, and felt quite like little women; where the boys bowed like princes, and slipped pretty confectious or flowers into the hands of the maidens they liked best; and where brilliant lights and gay music kept the party awake long after their young eyes should have been closed in sleep. On the other hand, Gretchen's friends were very few. Her companions were the children of the street, whose wicked words often made her tremble, though she would sometimes wind her thin arm about some tattered little shoulder, and whisper that it was wicked to swear, and that mother said God wished everybody to be gentle and good.

Both of the little girls had heard the blessed lesson which the Son of God taught, and is ever teaching, to the sons of men. There are no "rich" and "poor" in His school, and whether Fleeta was shown in her gilded Bible the words, "Thy will be done," or "Love one another," or Gretchen heard them from her mother's lips, the lesson was the same. The same, yet not the same; for with Fleeta, the words entered no



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further than her eye or ear, while Gretchen's heart opened to receive them, and they nestled there, and grew until her poor life was glorified by their radiance. They taught her not to murmur at her lot ; to toil patiently, and to take with gratitude the few joys that were given her.

No harsh, unkind word ever fell from Gretchen's lips ; and on fair-days, when she stood in the market-place selling, or trying to sell, her mother's knitting and needle-work, her voice was as gentle and cheerful at the close of the day as in its beginning, however wearied she might be.

Sometimes when trudging through the long streets, with her basket hanging on her arm, or balanced upon her head, she would pause to soothe some poor fretted child, or aid another in carrying a heavy burden, or help a blind man over the crossings, or pick up and restore the fallen fruit of the old woman who sold plums and pretzels at the corner.

But what she loved best to do was to help her mother, who was often too ill to work ; or to assist the poor little lame girl, who lived in the room below, to go down the broken stairway and breathe the air and sunshine of the street. This poor little cripple loved her, and well she



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might, for Gretchen's cheerful words and gentle arm were the joy of her life, and since that sweet face had lit up the old garret, had not the boys in the street ceased to mock her and call her "little broken-back?"

Yes, Gretchen had friends, after all, besides her mother and the lame girl and the kitten, but cold and hunger and rough usage had made their ways uncouth and distant, and their dingy rags might have soiled Fleeta's beautiful garments had they chanced to brush past her on the street.

Fleeta, you see, was quite different from Gretchen in her thoughts and feelings, and her days were not spent as well as Gretchen's. Often they were spoiled by discontent and by fretting for pleasures beyond her reach, or by her pride and unkindness of heart.

Even those who loved her most sometimes would shake their heads sadly and say, "Ah! Fleeta, why not be happy and good? Thou hast nothing to make thee otherwise." But the wilful girl would make some angry reply, or burst into a passionate fit of crying, and declare that no girl ever was more ill-used or scolded than herself.

Her little brothers and sisters looked in vain to her for amusement or gentle words, though



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in her own selfish way she would play with them as long as *her* will and *her* pleasure were allowed to rule.

She would sometimes, it is true, throw her arms around her mother's neck and kiss her with some show of affection, when a new toy or longed-for pleasure awaited her, though the same mother had perhaps a moment before been grieved by her sulkiness or fits of passion. On Sundays, too, she would drop the silver into the poor-box with her pretty little fingers in so dainty a way, that her aunt said it would do any one's heart good to see her. But, for all that, the "love one another" had not yet entered her heart.

She was exacting and thoughtless toward all her playmates ; and as for *poor* children, she had no pity nor kindness for them at all. To her eyes they were all only ragged or dirty or vulgar ; and she quite forgot that human hearts beat as strongly in their little human bodies as in her own. Money was to her the great good of life ; and she was proud of her wealth, not because it gave her the means of making others better or happier, but because it made her, as she foolishly supposed, of more consequence than the poorer people about her.

Fleeta's maid was related to Gretchen's



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mother, and sometimes she would find her way to the garret where her kinswoman lived, and amaze her listeners with glowing accounts of all that was going on at her master's house. She would tell of the splendid balls and feasts held there, how the ladies and gentlemen sparkled with diamonds, and how the room seemed alive more with velvet and satins and flowers and jewels and perfumes than with human beings, and how lovely Miss Fleeta looked in her ball-dress—"just like a cloud of lace and gauze;" and how, above all, the little girl had been "fairly loaded with gifts on Christmas Eve, and the other children too—though Miss Fleeta had the most."

"If you had seen the tree, Katrine," she said one day to Gretchen's mother, "you'd remember it all your days. There the grand company all stood, Miss Fleeta first, and I holding her by the hand so as to make her wait till the Christ-child, you know, Gretchen, had lighted the candles and rung the little bell. At last we heard it ring, and the doors opened and the company all crowded in, Miss Fleeta springing away from me in an instant, leaving me there alone among all the fine ladies—"

"But the tree?" interrupted Gretchen breathlessly.



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“Oh! it was beautiful; all lit up with thousands of little lights and sparkling with colored glass balls. Every branch was hung full of the loveliest things, and on the top of it was a tiny angel in gold and silver, with such pretty wings—”

“A real angel, Lena?”

“No, no; a gift-angel,—and then down in the moss under the tree there was an image of the Christ-child made of wax, but just for all the world like a beautiful baby, with lambs standing 'round him.”

Gretchen listened with sparkling eyes and head bent eagerly forward as Lena talked on.

“And oh! you should have seen the things—such heaps of presents! All the tables about were covered! Miss Fleeta had rings and bracelets and chains and books and dolls and a play-house with little mirrors in it, full of the loveliest furniture, and little doll-ladies standing in it, or sitting as natural as life. And then there were china cups and saucers, and a little gold goblet and pitcher, and a big box full of wild animals that would have stood your hair on end to see them—”

“Oh!” exclaimed Gretchen, starting, “were they alive?”

“No, no, you foolish little one,” said the



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maid, "they were not a bit bigger than your kitten there. And near the tree there was a new chair all of carved wood and red velvet, just big enough for Miss Fleeta; and a dancing man worked by machinery, and dozens of other things!"

"And what did the other children get?" asked Gretchen, delighted.

"Oh, I haven't time to tell you half; there were drums and trumpets and whips and shops and tools and drawing-books and violins and villages, for the boys; and horses on rockers as big as live ponies, and lots of things for all, down to the baby. Even we servants got something, and I've a present for you, too, Gretchen," added the maid, quite out of breath, as she drew something from her pocket.

It was a very pretty blue-and-gilt bonbon box filled with candies.

"Oh! Lena, thank you! thank you!" cried Gretchen, as she eagerly received her treasure. "Oh! see, mother,—see how beautiful! Did the Christ-child send it to me, Lena?"

Lena hesitated a moment, and then said, "Yes, certainly he did, as much as to any of the other children."

Gretchen insisted upon her mother and Lena tasting some of her candies, and then she ran



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down the stair in great glee to give a share to the little lame girl.

" Bless her ! " said Lena to the mother, " she hasn't any more envy than a baby. Now, do you know, with all these things, Miss Fleeta cried herself to sleep on Christmas Eve because her sister's new wax doll opened its eyes the widest ? I declare, Katrine, my back aches from sitting so long on this box. It's a shame you're not able to have things more comfortable, and you so sickly, too. But Hans and I are going to get married next month, and after that, you know, you are always to have a home with us, for didn't your mother nurse mine in her last long sickness, and close her poor eyes, may God bless her soul ! "

At this moment Gretchen came running up the stairs.

" Oh, Lena, there was a beautiful sugar strawberry in the box, and I give it to Bertha. You ought to have heard her laugh ! Oh, how good the Christ-child is ! Do you know I dreamed, one night, that he came to see me, and put his arms around my neck, and promised to bring me something on Christmas Eve ; and when I woke up, there pussy had been lying all the time close by my head."

" That was a fine dream," said Lena, " but,



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bless me ! how late it is growing, and I have to curl my little mistress' hair for a children's party,—Good-by !”

And this was the way that the two children, Gretchen and Fleeta, lived and felt in the great German city. They seldom met each other, and when they did, Fleeta would turn her head haughtily away from “the forlorn, ragged little thing,” and Gretchen would look eagerly after her in simple admiration of the beautiful little lady with the golden curls.

The time came, however, when the two girls no longer could pass each other on the busy street. Before a year had passed, a fearful fever appeared among the children of the town ; and on the selfsame day two little graves were made. One of these was in a beautiful cemetery where tall white monuments glistened in the sunlight, flecked by the waving branches of trees or shadowed by stately evergreens. The other was in a well-trodden graveyard where crowded grass-grown mounds and sometimes a roughly made cross were all that could be seen.

In one grave was placed a white casket garlanded with flowers. It had been conveyed there by a procession of grand carriages filled with weeping relatives and friends, who gath-



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ered around while the solemn funeral rites were performed.

Into the other grave a plain wooden coffin was lowered, and the hurried burial service pronounced over it was broken by the sobs of the sole mourners—a pale careworn woman, accompanied by three or four frightened-looking children, barefooted and capless, and a lame girl holding a kitten in her arms.

Even then,—so runs the legend—the two children, Gretchen and Fleeta were entering, side by side, the lanes of Paradise. The cruel disease was forgotten, and free as air they trod the pearly path, their eyes eagerly fixed upon what seemed to be a cloud of glorious light in the distance. As they drew nearer, they found themselves in front of a Golden Gate. Around it the tenderest rosy light played and trembled, while, from within, soft music seemed pressing upon it, causing it to vibrate in sweet accord.

Gretchen drew back, awed and bewildered by the flood of dazzling light which streamed upon her; but Fleeta approached boldly, casting a haughty glance upon Gretchen as she passed.

What was the gate to Fleeta's eyes, after all, but gold; and had she not always been used



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to gold? Music, too, had ever been as her daily food, though this music indeed disturbed her strangely. Surely this gate was for the rich, the honored of earth; and was she not one of them? So she knocked confidently; while poor Gretchen, feeling unworthy, drew timidly aside, though the golden light streamed upon her whichever way she turned.

“Stand back, little beggar-girl!” said Fleeta; “do you not see that the gate can open only for such as I?” and she knocked again more impatiently than before. At last, as though the music could be contained within no longer, the golden portal opened, and a shining angel stood before them.

Fleeta would have pushed in past him, but, with a firm hand, he gently forced her back.

“Why do you knock at this gate?” he asked; “only the truly rich can enter here.”

“Let me go in, then,” replied the girl, “*I am rich!*” and she cast back a look of triumph upon poor Gretchen.

“Well,” replied the angel, “if you are rich you shall enter; but where are your riches?”

“My riches!” exclaimed Fleeta, “why, they are down in the world; father and mother have them now; but they used to be mine.”

“But,” asked the angel, sorrowfully, “what



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have you brought with you? I must see your treasures before you can enter."

Fleeta hung her head.

Then the angel turned to the other child, and said, in tones that seemed a part of the glorious music,

"Why do you not arise and enter?"

"Alas!" replied Gretchen, "I have no treasures. I have always been very poor, so I cannot enter the gate of the rich."

"Poor!" exclaimed the angel, "where is your poverty?"

"I left it upon the earth," said Gretchen, brightening with a sudden hope.

"And have you brought nothing with you?"

"Nothing, nothing at all," rejoined the child sadly; "but," she added in a brighter tone, "I am willing to wait, for I know that the dear Lord Jesus will yet send his angel for me."

"He has sent his angel," said the gate-keeper, "and this is the gate through which you are to enter; for your soul, though you know it not, is laden with treasures," and, with these words, he gently drew Gretchen in and closed the portal.

And this is the legend of The Golden Gate.



## THE WONDERFUL WELL.

### A CHRISTMAS SKETCH FROM LIFE.

LOUISE, Sophie, and I are sisters, and, when we were little girls, it was our great delight to go to grandmother's. Grandmother lived in a city house, but it had such a big green garden that, when you looked out of the back windows, you felt almost as if you were in the country. There were flowers and shrubs and grapevines in it, a currant-bush near the pump, and a real live apricot-tree that grew up in one corner straight past the drawing-room window, and nearly up to the windows of grandmother's chamber. When the apricots were ripe, it was fun to jump up and try to catch one, if you were in the garden; or if you were in the drawing-room it was just as pleasant to reach out and try to pluck the nearest; or even if you were in grandma's room, and nobody was there to scream that you surely would fall and break your neck, it was grand sport to reach down and try to catch one of the lovely little things with the hooked handle of grandma's green parasol. Not that



you ever could get one in any of these ways—no, indeed. The tree seemed enchanted, and held its tender, peachy treasures among its bright leaves as firmly as though they were frosted gold; for, you see, they were always just a quarter of an inch beyond the reach of any one unless he or she were in the tree. Grandma's colored man, Robert, who took care of the horses, sometimes would stand on the pump and reach down a few for us; but the time of times was when grandma allowed us to hold quilts and things under the tree while Robert shook it. Oh! But unless you're very little, and have a grandma, and the grandma has just such an apricot-tree in her garden, and every apricot on it is soaked through with sunlight and sweetness, you can't possibly understand it, after all.

I don't know why I tell you of the apricots here in this winter story, except that, perhaps, it is the best way of introducing you to grandma. She was like them in some respects—so bright and fresh and gentle and tender, with just a pretty bloom of age over her; and she had a light, sunshiny way of her own, just as they had, you know, swaying there among the branches.

Well, on Christmas it was grandma's custom to invite us all to dinner, and you may be sure



every one who was invited went. It is strange to have to tell you our names—it seems as if you ought to know them. First there were father and mother, and Aunt Jane and Uncle Augustus Allen and cousin Gus and Rosalie, and Louise and Lizzie and Sophy and Charley and Kate and Leslie and ever so many others—aunts, uncles, cousins, and relatives. And there was one stately great-uncle, of whom I now can remember only a shining gray circle of hair on top, a gorgeous bunch of seals dangling from beneath a big vest, and a pair of glossy boots below. I suppose there was more of him. Oh! yes, there was a hand that came out very slowly and settled softly on our heads, with, “This is Jane Eliza’s little one, eh!” or, “Well, Sophia, the little girl favors *you*, most certainly,” or, “So, this is Christmas, my dear?” To which last we would reply, in a very uncomfortable yet happy way, “Yes, sir,” and run off, with a queer feeling that there was a kind, stately Somebody in the world who knew us, and belonged to mother and father and grandma, and who came to life only on special family occasions.

I don’t remember much about the dinner, except that the “grace” was a little longer than usual, that we children were helped twice to turkey, and there was some delicious kind of fruit-



pudding, which nobody knows how to make nowadays. There were quite a good many flowers around, and celery-tops in high glasses, and little laughs trickling in and out among the soft clatter of knives and forks. Then somebody would stand up and speak; and grandma, looking quite pleased, would nod her head, and everybody would look toward her, and we children, glancing slyly at each other, would make believe we were trying not to laugh at something which we thought was in our minds. Then—well—very soon we'd all be up in the parlor again, playing games and having—oh! such good times! Grandma would sit in the big chair looking on in her smiling way, with a pretty flush on her cheeks, and her hands clasped on her knee almost as if she were praying.

Usually, a lovely Christmas-tree full of toys and *bonbons* and twinkling lights would grow right up in the middle of the back parlor while we were at dinner; but, on this special Christmas day, the back-room was shut up tight all the time before dinner, and when, later, we went up stairs from the table, in a merry crowd, it was still closed, though the front room was brilliantly lighted. Gus and Allen, the two big-boy cousins, staid out of the front parlor after dinner, but uncle Will started "Turn the Platter,"



and when we had had enough of that game we played "Open the Gate," and "We are three Gentlemen out of Spain" and "Oats, pease, beans," and some other old games quite as delightful and thrilling.

Suddenly we heard a bell tingle. "Down, youngsters!" shouted uncle Will. So, laughing, crowding, half-wild with expectation, we children huddled together and sat down upon the carpet in front of the folding doors, while grandma and the grown folks drew their chairs up close, so as to form a big half-circle around us.

Some of the front-parlor lights were put out. Tinkle, tinkle, went the bell again, and the folding-doors flew open!

Please do not expect me to explain it. I can only tell you what we all saw with our own eyes. Right in the middle of that back-parlor was a well—a beautiful gray well, with green vines trailing around it; over it hung a lovely green canopy made of Christmas vines that trailed from the chandelier and stopping a little below, twine themselves into a fairylike roof. The lights of the crystal chandelier were sparkling all through the evergreen, and the whole room was bright. It would have seemed like a dream but for one thing: The crimson window-curtains were unlooped and pinned together in the mid-



dle, and, through an opening where they didn't quite meet, I could see the bare limbs of the apricot-tree outside.

Where was I? Oh! yes, the well. And what do you think was there besides? Why, a beautiful fairy, with glittering wings and a crown of lilies. She held a magic wand in her hand. One and all declared she was "too sweet for anything!" There was music somewhere, very soft music, that seemed to keep time with the slight flutter of the fairy's wings as she danced lightly around the well. Then she stood still and waved her wand. Out jumped a big monkey from behind the well. A live monkey, it surely was, for it gave a great, long, soft jump toward us, and then, hearing some of us scream, it jumped back, and with another leap squatted upon the curb of the well. We were a little frightened at first, but when the monkey sprang, up on the curb and made a funny bow, we all laughed and clapped our hands, and concluded it was "splendid," since grandma and the rest were close behind us.

Again the fairy, waving her wand, held it toward the well, and the music grew a little louder. At this, the monkey (he was quite big for a monkey,—about as tall as cousin Gus, and just about as slender) took hold of the fairy's wand



and began to pull. As he pulled, it grew longer and a silver cord began to come from it, until at last, when he gave it a shake, we saw that it was a silver fishing-rod with a silver line and hook. When the fairy nodded, he bobbed his head in a funny way, and, still sitting on the well-curb, cast in his line and began to fish!

In an instant he had a bite. Oh! how funny he was then!—such antics! such chattering squeaks! and such pulling! But he hadn't caught a fish at all. It was a little paper parcel, just as dry and nice as could be. He swung it from the well to the fairy, and the fairy, taking it from the hook, actually tripped with it to grandma! Grandma, very much surprised, smiled, and thanked her. By the time the fairy got back to the well, Master Monkey had another bite, and so it went on—the music, the glittering lights, the monkey-fisherman with his comical motions and wonderful luck, the fairy tripping in with parcels, until every one in the room had received a Christmas gift. Even Robert, Catharine, and the maids, who stood just inside the door, soon were enriched with parcels which they accepted gratefully, but, for manners' sake, did not attempt to open. Then Master Monkey, finding he couldn't get any more bites, and going through a great many antics at the discovery,



finally turned a somersault, and plunged into the beautiful well.

Then the doors closed, the front parlor grew lighter and lighter, and then we all began to examine our parcels.

*"With Grandma's love. Merry Christmas,"* was written on each; and as soon as we could, with every one crowding about her, we kissed and thanked her, and looked at our own beautiful presents, and at each other's, exclaiming: "Oh! oh!" or "How pretty!" "Aren't you delighted?" Isn't that lovely?" until we had to sit down and rest.

By that time, Gus, Allen, and little Mary came in. There was a parcel for each on the piano-forte. When I told the three how very sorry we were that they had missed seeing the wonderful well, and the fairy and the monkey, and asked them where they had been all the time, they laughed.

"Oh, we've been having fun, too," they said—and then their eyes grew round and more sparkling over their newly-opened parcels.

Next, there was another merry game, and another, and father told the company a funny story that made everybody laugh. Finally, we children formed ourselves into a double line, "sort o' curved" as Charley said, and sang an old



Christmas carol that had been taught us on purpose to surprise grandma :

Oh ! all the bells on earth shall ring  
Oh Christmas day, on Christmas day ;  
And all the bells on earth shall ring  
On Christmas day in the morning.

All the angels in heaven shall sing  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day ;  
All the angels in heaven shall sing  
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day ;  
And all the souls on earth shall sing  
On Christmas day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain  
On Christmas day, on Christmas day ;  
Then let us all rejoice amain  
On Christmas day in the morning.

Soon after this, we all kissed grandma and thanked her, over and over, for our beautiful time and the lovely gifts ; then we bade one another good-by ; and I saw mother and some of the others whispering things to grandma that made her look very happy, and yet as if she had half a mind to cry.

Then, muffled and bundled to the chin, we soon felt the clear, frosty night-air blowing in our faces, and so—we all went homeward, under the Christmas stars.



## DICK AND THE BANTAMS.

ON Easter eve, when we younger folk were talking together, one of the big boys chanced to mention that he had fired a pistol at a cat that very afternoon. Immediately two gushing young creatures gave a shriek of horror, and declared that the murder of the poor cat was "cruel," "shameful," and "outrageous!"

I thought so, too, until the supposed murderer explained that his bullet had hit a fence about six feet from his intended victim, and that he had rejoiced over his bad aim ever since.

During the laugh that followed, I noticed that our friend, Mr. Carter, did not join heartily in the merriment. In fact, his face soon grew clouded, and his thoughts evidently were busy elsewhere. After a moment he turned to me and said:

"I have been thinking of something I did long ago. It troubles me even now, when I am reminded of it."

"Judging from your remorseful manner," I



said, "it must have been even a worse deed than Frank's attempt at cat-killing."

"It was," he replied; "shall I tell you all about it."

"Oh—do!" I exclaimed; and all the children echoed "Oh, do!"

"Well," resumed Mr. Carter. "Why not? I was a little fellow then, and yet big enough to be allowed the use of a gun occasionally. I had a pet cat, named Dick, a superb creature, large, sleek, and glossy, who loved me, and would follow me like a dog. Dick was so good and faithful that mother could leave the dairy door open without any fear that he would disturb the milk temptingly displayed in the rows of shining pans. He sometimes would look wistfully in at the door, as she stood pouring the milk from the bright pails, and when accidentally a white splash fell to the ground, he would leap to the spot and lick up every drop, considering the affair, no doubt, in the light of a reward for his honesty.

"Dick had big claws for neighboring cats, and even our dog Pompey had felt their sharpness; but my baby-sister and I could tumble him about for an hour without ever getting a scratch, so kind and gentle was he to those who loved and cared for him, though I know we



sometimes gave him pretty rough play. It was astonishing how much Dick knew. If a stray robin or sparrow perched upon our fence, it was as much as its life was worth for Dick to get a look at it ; and yet he would play in the barn yard all the morning and never touch one of the little bantams.

“ Those little bantams—how I did love them ! If there was any thing in the world I liked as well as Dick, it was those soft, beautiful little bantams. There were six in all, and every one of them had its name. There was Jenny, speckled and saucy, with the daintiest little white pantalets in the world ; then little Dicky, named after the cat, because its feathers were just the color of Dicky’s head ; and Sickly, who was feeble, and didn’t seem to enjoy life as his brothers and sisters did ; and Snowdrop, who hadn’t a black or gray feather on him ; and Funny, who tumbled about like a little clown ; and last of all, the Prodigal Son, so called because I noticed he strayed off every pleasant day, but was glad enough to come trotting home again whenever it was dark or rainy.

“ Every day Dick and I would go up to the barn ; he to look for rats and mice among the rafters, and I to scatter the crumbly mush for



Jenny, Dicky, Sickly, Snowdrop, Funny, and the Prodigal Son. It was great fun to see them tumble over each other in their haste to pick up the yellow crumbs. I used to take especial pains that Sickly should get his full share. As for the Prodigal Son, I usually let him take his chances, and sometimes laughed to see him waddling in from under the fence after the meal was all eaten.

“One day when, as usual, he came home tired and weary, I saw the old hen comfort him with a plump worm, and I couldn’t help joking with Dick about it.

“‘Dick,’ said I, ‘isn’t he absurd?’”

“Dick only said ‘Me-ow;’ but he looked as if he understood me. All at once he made a motion, as if to say, ‘If you wish me to do it, master, I’ll swallow the little rascal for you; but I called him back fiercely, and gave him to understand that when my bantams needed punishing I would attend to it myself.

“About a week after that, I had an unhappy day. I had been late at breakfast, and had neglected to feed my bantams. In school, I missed my lessons, was saucy to the teacher, and in consequence was ‘kept in.’ By the time I reached home, feeling very cross and ill-natured indeed, mother met me at the gate.



“‘Henry,’ said she, ‘you left some weeds on the garden path yesterday. Please take them all away as soon as you have eaten your dinner.’

“Mother was always so kind that I answered, ‘yes, mother,’ as cheerfully as I could. During dinner, however, I vented all my ill-nature upon Pompey and the baby (Dick was not in the room, or I might have acted unkindly even to him). In two minutes after I had seated myself, Pompey was whining pitifully under the table, and I was calling out lustily, while the baby pulled at the table-cloth, and looked up at me with great wondering eyes;—

“‘Rosy, I think you might come and take Baby away. How can I eat my dinner with half a dozen young ones around?’

“‘Arrah!’ retorted Norah the housemaid, hurrying in from the kitchen and snatching the baby from the floor, ‘where’s yer countin,’ Misther Hennery? Blamin’ one poor blissed little crayture, unless its yerself, indade, sir, that’s as cross as six!’

“This didn’t put me in any better humor, so I sulked through my dinner, and, after that, pitched the poor withered weeds into the pig-pen as savagely as if they had been the cause of all the day’s mishaps. The next things to



be attended to were my poor neglected bantams. I knew that John, our colored man, was too kind-hearted not to have fed them in my absence, but I felt sure they had missed me for all that.

“ ‘Dick! Dick! Here, Dick!’ I called.

“Dick did not come leaping toward me as usual. “Where is he!” I wondered. Calling him two or three times in vain, I went alone to visit my pets, trying all the while to subdue the great lump of ill-nature that kept rising in my throat.

“Arriving at the barn-yard what a sight presented itself! There lay Jenny, Sick, and the Prodigal Son upon the hard ground, *dead!* And under the shed sat Dick, deliberately pulling to pieces the body of poor little Snowdrop!

“Almost blinded with passion, I seized a rope that lay near me, and resolved to deal full vengeance upon him.

“ ‘He has killed my poor bantams,’ I thought, ‘and he must die himself. It is only *justice.*’

Dick didn’t try to get away from me at all. He only rubbed his head against my knee and purred while I put the rope around his neck. I would have hung him in my rage, but he looked up at me so earnestly I could not do it. Resolved, however that *justice* should be done,



I tied him to a tree and rushed to the house for my gun. I loaded it, and hurried back. I could hear Dick crying piteously, as he tugged at the rope.

“Steeling myself against him, I raised the gun and fired.

Dick was quiet enough then, poor fellow !

“Just at that moment John called to me from the field—

“‘What yer bin shootin’ at, Massa Henry? A weasel?’

“I couldn’t tell him; so I shouted back in reply—

“‘I’ve not seen any weasel.’

“‘Hain’t you?’ answered John, leaning on his scythe. Well, *I* killed one early dis mornin’, but I didn’t know till arterwards what he’d bin a-doin’. He’d bin a-killin’ most all ob your bantams, Massa Harry—dat’s a fac’, he had.’

“I didn’t wait to hear any more, but rushed into the barn-yard. With an aching heart I lifted my dead birds one by one. There on each little throat, was the fatal sign of the weasel—a small hole, through which the warm life-blood had been drawn. I picked up Snowdrop just where poor Dick had dropped him when I dragged him away. *The hole was in Snowdrop’s neck too.*



"I sank upon a stone and cried bitterly. Dick, dear faithful Dick, had been eating the *dead* bird even while the live ones, Funny and Dicky, had been chirping at his feet.

"It was too late to recall my deed—my act of supposed justice—now.

"With many a sob and resolve never to be passionate again, I buried poor Dick under the rose-bush in my garden, and near him, beneath the lilac-tree, I laid my bantams.

"It was a long time ago ; but when I went back to the old homestead last summer, I stole alone to a thicket of tangled rose-bushes near the fence.

"I parted the branches, and far down among them I could see the great round stone I had placed there years ago. It was green and moldy, but I could trace out the name my boyish hand had chiseled upon it—"



DICK.

All of the little company, old and young, had been listening to Mr. Carter, and when he ceased



speaking no one cared to break the silence for a moment.

At last I asked the little Kate if she understood what "justice" meant.

"Course I do," she replied promptly; "it means shootin' cats."

"Oh, no, Katy," said Eddie; "it means *don't punish until you find out.*"

"That is something like it," I replied; "but you must remember that justice does not always punish—sometimes it rewards."

"Anyhow," chimed in Charley, "it doesn't mean the same as *revenge*—does it Mr. Carter?"



## CUSHAMEE:

OR

### THE BOY'S WALK

YOUNG folks, little or big, hearken to the story of Lulu and Thomas Laffer!

In a pleasant country room, striped with deepening shade and setting-sunlight, a little girl lately sat talking with two dear friends—her cat and her doll.

She was rocking on a pretty wicker chair; the cat lay at her feet listening.

This girl was Lulu Laffer.

“Dear little Cushamee—precious little Cushamee,” she said, hugging the doll tightly, “what are you looking at with your big blue eyes?”

“Mam-ma!” cried Cushamee, who was a talking doll.

“Oh! Pussy, did you hear that? She spoke without my touching the wires at all—at least if I touched them I didn’t know it.”



Most persons would have declared that Pussy only said, "Mieow!" But Lulu had not been long enough in the world to have her ears dulled; and so she heard the rest of the cat's answer quite distinctly.

"That's a fine doll, Lulu; I only wish my kittens could speak as plainly. Put her down here, do, and let me tumble her about awhile."

"No indeed you sha'n't, Pussy. Lie still, and behave yourself. Do you want to see me shut her eyes, Pussy?"

Pussy winked, as if to say—"You *can't* do it?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Lulu, "you shall see!"—and the doll's bright eyes were closed in a twinkling.

"Now go-sleepy, Cushamee—and I'll sing to you—

By! by!  
Never fear—  
Mamma's watching  
Baby dear."

"Pa-pa," cried the doll, in a whining voice, without opening its eyes.

"Oh!" screamed Lulu, almost throwing Cushamee down, "I *declare* I didn't touch the wire then! Isn't it strange?"



"Nonsense!" Pussy, blinking, seemed to answer. "When you pat her you move the wires without knowing it, Now don't talk to me any more—I'm sleepy."

Lulu rocked softly and quietly, singing—to no particular tune—

"Cushamee, Cushamee !  
Pussy won't speak to me !  
Go-sleepy, Cushamee—"

Just then a terrible pair of boots sprang into the room. Lulu's brother Tom was in them. Puss rose slowly writing an S in the air with her tail, while she glared at Tom with green eyes.

"Ha! ha!" shouted a voice that seemed to come out of the boots; "I've been listening to you, Miss Lulu. Ha! ha! Big thing on dolls, —ha! ha!"

Lulu hugged Cushamee more tightly than ever, and told Tom to "go away."

"Stiss-s! you great ugly stone-thrower, you!" hissed the cat (but Tom could not understand her); "go away! stiss-s!" Thereupon Tom treated Pussy to a song—dancing around her as he sang, bowing and scraping at the end of every line—



“ A cat came fiddling out over a farm,  
With a pair of bagpipes under his arm ;  
He could sing nothing but fiddle-cum-fee,  
The mouse has married the bumble-bee,  
Pipe—cat—bee—mouse—  
Who'll go quickest out of the house ? ”

With these last words, came a kick from the boots—Puss cried pitifully as she limped away.

Lulu, hoping to touch Tom's feelings, pulled the wires slyly.

“ Mam-ma—Pap-pa,” cried the doll, opening its big blue eyes.

Tom sneered.

“ Ha ! ha ! ‘ Cushamee,’ indeed ! Call *that* saying ‘ papa’ and ‘ mamma ’—do you ? And when the wax balls roll over, you call it ‘ shutting its eyes’—do you ? Talking to the cat, too, like a little goose—Lulu, you're a baby ! ”

“ I'm not a baby ! ” retorted Lulu, ready to sob : “ I'm a little girl. You're a baby yourself.”

“ Yes,” pursued Tom, planting himself before her in a tantalizing way. “ When you see me rocking dolls and talking to cats, I *will* be a baby—I own it. Why don't you go out-doors and play ? ”

“ I have been out playing nearly all day,” answered Lulu, wiping her eyes ; “ and oh,



Tommy, what do you think! my walking-doll went alone, all the way down the brick walk, and—”

“There you are again, you naughty child! always talking about dolls—”

“Oh, Tom! that isn’t naughty; quarreling is naughty, and disobedience, and such things, but—”

“I tell you it is!” roared Tom furiously; “I’ll smash their ugly little heads, if you don’t stop it. Pshaw! I didn’t mean to make you cry. Girls *are* babies, anyhow! Before I’d be a girl, I’d—”

“Meow!” suggested Pussy—stealing into the room.

“Yes, I’d meow! Ha! ha! that’s pretty good! I was going to say—before I’d be a girl, I’d be a—”

“Pap-pa!” squeaked the doll, for Lulu was patting it now, in great agitation.

Tom, in quite a “temper,” declared the room was bewitched. Just as he was about to finish his sentence the supper-bell rang. He rushed down stairs, intent on begging for at least six pieces of gingerbread.

Lulu followed, and, after putting Pussy’s supper on the hearth, she sat down, meekly, beside her brother.



This was Thomas Laffer.

That night he chuckled, as he pulled off his boots. "Ha! ha! I think I've shamed Lulu pretty well out of it by this time. Such nonsense—pooh! If I were king, I'd cut off the head of every doll in the land; or else I'd fire all the girls. They're not much use, anyhow;" and Tom, jumping into his night-clothes, scampered across the room. He had intended to stand upon his head, and throw his feet against the wall, just before he sprang into bed; instantly he stopped short, screaming,

"Oh, oh! Come, quick—mo-ther!"

His mother ran in. "What *is* the matter, dear?"

"Oh, ho, boo—hoo! I've run a needle, or something, into my foot!"

True enough, it was a needle. Lulu was called. She held a light and cried for "poor Tom," while the mother fumbled at the twitching foot.

"There, Tom—it's out!" cried the mother, delighted. "Now, go to bed at once; and don't play about the room with bare feet."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Tom, quite subdued.

For hours afterwards he lay tossing and turn-



ing upon his cot. Every one else in the house was asleep. Only the distant barking of dogs could be heard. The moon was bright and round; and restless frogs were jumping in the shadows of the garden.

"Pap-pa!" squeaked a voice close by Tom's ear.

He started up—"Who calls?" said he.

"*I* call," answered the voice, "Cushamee. Get up!"

Tom shivered, and strove to wake his mother, who slept in the next room; but his voice failed every time he tried to scream or to utter her name.

"Get up!" repeated the voice, sternly.

Tom tried to lie still, but could not. He slid slowly out of the bed, not daring to lift his eyes.

"Come with me," said Cushamee.

How dreadfully her feet sounded upon the floor! They creaked, they rattled and clicked, jerking her forward with a strange motion. But they never stopped, and Tom was forced to follow. On they went, out in the hall; down the stairway; into the garden—every blade of grass pricked Tom's bare feet, just as the needle did,—still he could not stop.

At last they paused by the garden brook.



In an instant slimy things crawled and sprawled over him from head to foot, spluttering in his ears ; trailing over his eyes ; sliding up and down his cheek, neck, legs, and arms ; wriggling and twisting in his hair.

“ Oh ! ” he cried, shuddering, “ what are these ? ”

“ Nothing,” said Cushamee, rolling her great eyes at him, “ nothing but the frogs and harmless creatures you have tortured. Begin with his arms and legs now, my good fellows, and see how he likes it ? ”

“ Murder ! murder ! ” roared Tom. “ Oh, Cushamee, I’ll never do it again ! Murder, murder ! they’re killing me ! ”

“ Gluck ! ” muttered an old toad, near his ear ; “ bite away, comrades, he hasn’t any feeling— it doesn’t hurt him a bit ; the idea of an animal that can’t jump the length of his own body, feeling any pain, is absurd.”

“ Help ! help ! ” screamed Tom.

Cushamee held up her hand. “ There, that will do ! Jump back into the water, my friends, You have worried him enough for the present. We have other work to do to-night.”

Next she rattled on towards the well. Tom, trembling with fear, ventured to glance at her in the moonlight. She looked just as she did



while in Lulu's arms, except that she was larger, whiter, and had a fierce look in her rolling eyes. Her feet were different ; but that was because she had on a pair of shoes such as the walking dolls wear.

On the curb of the well sat two kittens and an old cat.

" Here he is," said Cushamee sharply ; " do your duty."

The kittens glared at him, but seemed to have no other life. The old cat sprang upon his head, and at a command from Cushamee the creature seized him and began to slide with him down into the well. Instantly the two kittens tumbled after her and clung to Tom's neck. Down, down, they all went, all struggled in the black water, rising to the surface, and the old cat and the dreadful kittens pulled him under again every time.

" Don't let him go, children !" hissed the cat ; " he drowned you, and now you just show him how it feels ; you can't hurt him much, to be sure, for how can an animal who can't see in the dark, and never eats mice, have any feeling ? "

" Help !" gasped Tom, the last time he arose. " Help I say !

" Take hold of the well-rope," commanded Cushamee's voice, coldly.



He obeyed, and something drew him upward—the old cat trying to pull him back with her sharp claws, as he rose hand over hand. Faint and dripping, he stood once more upon the ground. Cushamee motioned him to follow her. After a long tramp she halted. The songs of birds filled the air; they came nearer and nearer, and hovered over his head; each bird gave a shrill cry as it saw him.

As Tom looked up he noticed in the clear moonlight that each one held between its feet a stone nearly as big as its body.

“These are the birds you have frightened and pelted,” said Cushamee; “they will show you how stones feel.”

“Tu whoo! whoo!” screeched an old owl, perched near by; “fire away! He can’t suffer though, for how can an animal without wings have any feeling?”

Instantly the stones began to rain upon Tom.

In vain he bent and wriggled and groaned—every one hit him upon a tender spot. Soon owls, squirrels, and hosts of little creatures joined in the attack.

“Take that!” they hooted and squealed, “and that—and that!”

Bruised, bleeding, half mad with pain, Tom cried in vain for mercy. Not until the birds,



growing weary, flew away, one by one, did the storm of stones grow less. Finally, Cushamee clattered forward again, drawing him after her as by some invisible cord.

"Oh, stop!" cried Tom at last; "I cannot walk, the sand's so soft; I'm sinking; sinking!"

"Crawl in there," commanded Cushamee, pointing to a hole in the ground.

Tom was forced to obey. He soon found himself in a smoothly finished cavern—not very large; but he was glad enough to sit down there and rest his bruised, aching body.

He could not see Cushamee, but after a moment, he heard her voice saying, "Ants, do your duty; show him how it feels to have one's house trampled down over one's head."

"We know him," buzzed a great chorus; "he has destroyed our cities many a time."

Tom sprang up, but it was too late; the sand was already tumbling upon him; down came the walls, rumbling, rushing like a sea of gravel; the roof was falling! He gasped, struggled, and tried in vain to call for help. For a while his sufferings were fearful, but Cushamee had not done with him yet. Soon the mountain of sand seemed to roll off his body, and he found himself once more beside the terrible doll.



Scarcely able to walk, he felt compelled to follow her. At last, he sank upon the grass from sheer exhaustion. Clatter, clatter, click, click, came back the feet, and Cushamee's white face leaned over him. She had grown to a prodigious size, and her eyes rolled and glared at him with savage ferocity.

"Get up!" she shrieked, shaking him with her great wooden arms; "get up! I have not done with you yet."

"I can't," he moaned; "I am almost dead."

"Get up, you cruel boy!" and she shook him until his very bones seemed to crack; "I'll teach you to call playing with dolls 'naughty.' I'll teach you to laugh at the innocent sport of little girls!"

At this, hundreds of bells began to toll mournfully, as for his funeral.

"Mercy, mercy!" he sobbed.

"No mercy for *you*!" yelled Cushamee, tumbling him about as a tiger would a kitten; "no mercy for *you*, you great toad-killing, kitten-drowning, bird-stoning, ant-mashing young villain! Playing with dolls is naughty, is it? —s'-c-a-t—" and, with one tremendous push, she sent him rolling down the hill.

The shock made him open his eyes; he



found himself sitting upon the floor in his night-clothes! He actually had tumbled out of his bed. The breakfast-bell was ringing savagely. And Bridget was pounding at his door.

"Get up, Masther Tom," she cried in subdued tones of wrath. "If I haven't shuk this bell till the arms is most off of me, and not a word would you say, only moanin' an' ——"

"Tommy! come down—griddle-cakes!" called Lulu's clear, cheery voice from the stairway—"griddle-cakes and maple-syrup—come down, quick!"

As Tom jerked his jacket on, he muttered wearily to himself:

"Well, I'm mighty glad it wasn't real, anyhow."

Lulu has had fine times ever since that morning. Tom always tries to be kind to her, and he never thinks of laughing at her dolls. Indeed he really looks quite solemn whenever Cushamee says "Pap-pa!"



## ALL IN A DAY.

IF it had been any one else, it would not have seemed so strange. But Johnny was the life of the house. Johnny's laugh, Johnny's quick step through the hall, Johnny's terrific rush down-stairs that always made grandma drop her knitting with a startled "Oh-h!" Johnny's ringing voice, Johnny's odd mishaps, Johnny's comical, provoking, astonishing ways, —why home wouldn't be home at all without them!

So everyone in the house felt; especially when, one day, all these things suddenly ceased, and Johnny lay on the sofa insensible. It seemed as if there were nothing bright left in the whole world; for was not Johnny lying there, looking as if he never could waken—Johnny, who wouldn't open his eyes even for Baby-Nannie, beg as hard as she would, though all the time the little girl half-believed he would jump up with a "Boo!" and make them all laugh?



This is what had happened :

Early on that same morning Johnny had gone out-of-doors, intent upon training his dog Nero to draw his new wagon. The wagon was a fine affair, large enough to hold a small boy ; but the harness wasn't much—just a piece of old clothes-line and some leather straps, though it would do very well to begin with. The grand old dog, never suspecting, came bounding toward Johnny at the first whistle, but he didn't like the harness at all.

“ You stupid ! ” laughed Johnny, tugging at the buckles, as he tried to hitch the puzzled Nero to the shafts. “ Don't you want to be a horse ? Be quiet, sir ! ( O bother ! stop jerking. There ! you're harnessed at last. Now, let's see you travel ! ”

Nero ran a short distance, turned about to see what was the matter, upset the wagon, and, tucking his tail wretchedly between his legs, sneaked off toward his kennel, dragging the capsized wagon after him.

“ Whoa ! Whoa ! ” cried Johnny. “ Come back here. Whoa ! Wait till I set up the wagon, can't you ? Whoa ! Whoa, now, old fellow ! Guess I'll jump in. Now, sir, go long ! ”

Off started Nero again. The ground was smooth and hard, and Johnny's weight not



enough to hinder such a big dog. His two little sisters, running after the wagon, thought they never in all their lives had seen anything so fine.

"He tan dallop just like a horsey, tan't he, Bertha?" panted little Nannie.

"Yes, indeed, he can!" replied Bertha, all excitement. "Hold your lines tight, Johnny!"

"You bet!" shouted Johnny, looking back. "Isn't he great!"

Johnny didn't care to say that Nero paid no sort of heed to the lines. It was glory enough that the girls should *think* he really guided his animal.

"Oh! don't go down there! Don't!" suddenly screamed Bertha.

The young man did not answer. He was going very fast now. The wagon bumped about considerably. Nero was running as hard as he could down the slope that led into a hollow place where the men had been digging. It was to be an underground ice-house, reaching a little way into the hill.

"Whoa! Whoa!" shouted Johnny; but he might just as well have said, "Go! Go!" for all Nero cared.

Soon they were in the deepest part of the excavation, where the hill-side had been dug away



a little, so as to form a rough wall. Nero ran to this spot as if attracted by the coolness of the damp, shady ground ; there he very deliberately upset the wagon, and lay down to enjoy himself.

"Well, if you're not the funniest old horse that ever I saw !" laughed Johnny, jumping up and knocking the red clay from his clothes. "What brought you down here, I wonder !"

Nero did not answer. He seemed inclined to take a nap.

"Now, sir," continued Johnny, setting up the wagon again and taking his seat, "we'll start fresh. Let's see if you can pull up hill."

Nero was a mule now instead of a horse. The more Johnny pulled and coaxed and scolded, the more motionless and resolute old Nero grew.

"I know !" cried Johnny, jumping out at last ; "I'll just run up and shake a little of that loose earth down on the old lazy-bones. *That* will start him."

Up he ran to where an overhanging ledge of sod projected over Nero and the wagon. It was a more dangerous place than he knew, for the soil had fallen away from beneath, and a very large piece of the edge was ready to tumble at the slightest disturbance. He intended only



to stamp off a few lumps of soil with his heel, but alas !—

Well might the little girls run to the house, screaming for help. Johnny had fallen, and with him so much earth that Nero and the wagon were completely hidden ! Johnny rolled and bounced down to the bottom of the excavation where his head hit heavily against a jutting rock.

The poor boy was picked up insensible and carried into the house. When one of the men afterward went back to the hollow to look for Nero, he felt so anxious about Johnny, it seemed to him of very little consequence that he found the dog buried under the dirt, quite cold and stiff.

“Arrah ! it’s buried I might better have left ye, ye poor baste, for it’s dead enough ye are,” he said. “Bad luck to this lumberin’ wagon that kept ye from freein’ yersel’ till the breath was out of ye !”

So saying he cut away the harness from poor Nero, and hastened back to the kitchen.

“Och ! bad luck to ye, Mike !” sobbed the cook, who had been howling behind her apron ever since she saw Johnny carried in. “Couldn’t ye mind the blessed child better ner that ? Ah’ but it’s kilt he is, the poor bhoy !”



"Sorra a bit kilt," exclaimed Mike earnestly ; "there's niver a bone broken in him. It's only knocked spacheless he was, wid the fall."

"Och, much ye know about it," moaned the cook.

Just then Bertha rushed in, clapping her hands joyfully, though her cheeks were wet with tears.

"Oh ! he's awake ! Johnny's awake !" she cried. "He's sitting up on the sofa almost well, and he wants to know about Nero."

"The dog's kilt, clane kilt intirely," said Mike, shaking his head sadly. "Och ! but the poor bhoy'll take it hard !"

Bertha heard no more. She ran up to the drawing-room where the family were gathered around Johnny, and whispered something to her father,—something that Johnny heard, for with a sharp cry he fell over, and hid his face in the sofa-cushions.

Poor Johnny ! He was not seriously injured. He had a lump on his head, that was all. In less than an hour he was able to sit up by the table and look at pictures. No, not look at them exactly, but *try* to do so, for the doctor had said he must not cry. In vain Bertha brought the prettiest book she had ; in vain little Nannie comforted him in her sweet, child-



ish way. Every few moments he would push aside the pictures, and leaning his bandaged head on his hand, say with quivering lip, while his eyes filled with tears: "Nero! poor old Nero! *I* killed him!"

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What sound was that on the gravel-walk? What was Mike saying about its being "only sinseless the poor baste must a' bin"? What was coming panting up the stair, in response to papa's whispered coaxing? What—

Why, it was Nero! Nero, tottering feebly and dingy with dirt, but Nero still. No one could doubt that. He was too weak a dog to have three children hugging him at such a rate; yet he must have liked it, for he whined with joy and wagged his tail with as much spirit as any dog could have been expected to show under the circumstances.

And the very next day, Johnny went back to his old ways again!



## A DOLL'S PARTY.

### A SKETCH FROM REAL LIFE.

NO boys admitted to this story. It is expressly for girls. I wish to tell the little ladies of something that lately took place at a lovely home in this city ; and if they are not delighted to hear of it, it will be because they have not the right motherly feeling for their dolls, but are willing to have them moping at home while they, the mammas, are off on a frolic.

There is a bright little girl living up town, whom her friends call "Pussy ;" not because she has whiskers, or is apt to scratch, but because she is so frolicsome, and quick, and affectionate ; and, above all, because they love her so much, that any ordinary name—such as Mary, Alice, or Julia—wouldn't suit their purpose at all.

Well, Pussy has a doll, or, rather, an adopted daughter from Paris, named Marie, who, of course, can't speak our language yet, but is so gentle and stylish that Pussie is very fond of her. Marie is very good, too, about sitting



down—which is a great virtue in dolls—and, instead of sticking her arms out, like a pair of dividers, she allows them to be folded quite gracefully, which also is a quality that cannot be too highly commended. In view of these excellent traits, Pussy feels that she cannot do too much to promote her doll's happiness. Consequently, Marie has the finest, daintiest dresses that can be made ; not basted together in the disgraceful way that the clothes of many poor dolls are sewn, but every stitch has been taken with care. Her underskirts, night-gowns,—in fact, all her clothes—are made in the most complete manner possible. Her stockings are as perfect as Pussy's own, and her tiny shoes would do credit to any shoemaker in town. Of course, she has an opera-cloak, and a dress bonnet, and a parasol, for French dolls cannot possibly do without such things, and Pussy is not one to let her adopted daughter want for anything. Marie has also many other advantages which dolls whose hearts are made of ordinary bran rarely enjoy. Last week her mamma and grandmamma planned a great surprise for her. They gave her a day party, and invited all the nice dolls of her acquaintance to attend. The invitations were issued in fine style ; and, as dolls are apt to feel awkward and



embarrassed in going out alone, each one was allowed to bring her mother with her.

The mothers all were less than eleven years of age, and of course were very glad to see the fun. At two o'clock the party assembled, and quite a brilliant affair it was, I assure you. Every doll had on her finest things, and her hair had been dressed with care. Probably they had looked rather queer during the morning, all bristling with curl-papers and crinkling pins, (and so perhaps had a few of the mammas, for that matter), but everything was right, now; even the celebrated Flora McFlimsy would have been delighted with their appearance. I am happy to say, also, that the dolls acted charmingly. They all sat down in the most approved style: held their handkerchiefs and fans (those who had them) as well as one could expect; kept up a pleasant, lady-like smile the entire afternoon; and never once sulked, or begged to go home, or made any naughty speeches.

Of course, the young mammas had a grand time comparing their daughters and talking over their own family affairs—sometimes dancing, and sometimes playing merry games, by way of amusing Marie's friends, who, being so lately from Paris, did not know the ways of the country sufficiently to join in. All the mam-



mas insisted that Marie was the loveliest doll of all; but Pussy would not hear of such a thing. While they were discussing these family matters very softly, so that the dolls could not hear the compliments paid (for all agreed that "of all things a vain little doll was the worst"), supper-time arrived. A spirited march sprang to life from a piano behind the palms, and, to its music, twenty little girls, bearing twenty beautiful dolls, marched in joyous procession to the feast prepared for them,—the crowning point of the whole affair.

When the dining-room curtains swung aside a pretty scene was disclosed, bright with candles and flowers. Upon the center of the long oval table was a much smaller table of the same shape, and around it waited twenty little golden chairs.

Before supper was announced, Pussy's own mother had, with Pussy's assistance, placed a rosebud and a little card at the plate of each young mamma. These cards, with the names on them, made it quite easy for each guest not only to take the place assigned her, but also to understand why her dolly was now taken from her and given a seat at the little table of honor—the table of the dolls. There it stood, spread in fine style for the dollies, while the mammas



sat around the large table at which Pussy presided with pretty dignity.

Then you should have heard the exclamations of delight when each mother realized that her own dear doll was right before her—where she could see that the child was conducting itself properly, and, of all things, not lolling in its chair.

Everything on the small table was on a tiny scale: plates, cups, saucers, tumblers, spoons, knives, forks, and napkins. Then there were wee biscuit, and miniature birds and salads, and little pyramids of ice-cream, and little dishes of confection, and the cunningest mottoes that you ever saw. Then there were iced-cakes, that your brother could have eaten in a mouthful; in short, everything was just dainty enough for a fairy. Of course, the mammas had fine things to eat, too; and they did justice to the repast, I assure you. In fact, they all had far better appetites than their dolls, who just sat and stared at the good things, too delighted to eat at all.

After supper, the mammas and dolls adjourned to the drawing-room, where they enjoyed themselves finely. I forgot to mention that there was just one young gentleman of the party, who came in late, a very young gentleman,



Pussy's brother, who nevertheless became of instant importance when a dance was proposed. At the first tingling of the music, his sister slid up to him, and begged him to dance with her. "Oh, *do*, Roddy!" she pleaded; "just once."

"Can't do it," said Roddy, drawing himself up with great dignity; "there isn't time."

"What *do* you mean, Roddy?"

"Why," returned Roddy, taking one glance at several bright-eyed little girls unconsciously waiting for him, "I don't want to dance with anybody. I must go!"

This scattered the girls, and the little man was seen no more that afternoon.

Then the girls danced with one another, or perhaps their own dolls, and all galloped gracefully up and down the fine room, to the tune of "Pop goes the weasel."

Next came a quiet little game which allowed the guests to cool off and rest before it was time to go home. Then such a commotion as there was in the dressing-room, putting on hats and cloaks. The dolls, too, required to be properly arrayed in their "street-things," and the mammas had to bid their hostess and Marie, and one another, "good-bye."

Finally, at precisely half-past five, the last doll was carried out, the last carriage rolled away—and the party was over.



## LEARNING BY HEART.

“WHAT Bible verse do you say this morning, Nelly?” asked Mrs. Davis of her young daughter, one fine day last Summer.

Nelly started in trepidation, as she answered—

“Oh! I don’t know it yet, mother, and it’s almost school time. It’s a beautiful verse from Paul’s Epistle to the Romans—something about ‘loving each other’;” adding, as she opened her Testament, where a bright blue book-mark divided the pages, “Here it is! Jenny Scott has the same verse, I remember”—and Nelly read aloud:

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another.”

Mrs. Davis happening to leave the room an instant afterward, Nelly went on repeating the words two or three times, without looking from the book. At length, her little brother Charley put his curly head in at the doorway just as she



was repeating, for the fourth time, "Be kindly affec—"

"Nelly ! Nelly !" he shouted. "Come, harness my horsey for me. You said you would do it after breakfast."

"Oh, Charley, do go away," answered Nelly, petulantly. "Don't you see I'm studying?" and she resumed the verse.

"Be kindly af—" and once more a voice, not at the door, but in Nelly's own heart, interrupted her. "*Am* I 'kindly affectioned'?" it asked.

"Certainly," answered another voice, also within. "I love Charley dearly; but then he always plagues me just when I'm studying."

"Be kindly affectioned," resumed Nelly, aloud, "one to another with brotherly love—one to another with brotherly love—in honor pre—I declare, Charley, you're real naughty to bother me so. I'll tell mother if you don't go away this instant!" she exclaimed quickly, as Master Charles slipped once more into the room, and coaxingly presented his toy-horse and wagon.

Charley did not answer, but sat down on the floor beside her, and tried to arrange the complicated little harness himself.



"Oh, do stop your fumbling!" cried Nelly, now really irritated by Charley's atrocious conduct. "I don't believe there ever was such a boy for teasing. Why *can't* you go down stairs?"

" 'Cause I don't want to," returned Charley, promptly. "You're an old, naughty Nelly, *you* are; you're b-a-a-d," and his pent-up tears began to flow in earnest.

"Nelly! Nelly!" whispered the voice again, "Charley's copying your own temper;" but she did not listen to it very attentively. How could she when she had the verse to learn?

Finally, after studying it a little more, she seized her books and hat, and moved toward the door.

"You're ba-ad," sobbed Charley, looking up at her, his little face flushed, and an angry light in his swimming eyes.

Nelly glanced at him for an instant, and would have hurried out into the street, had not something in her heart rebuked her.

"Poor Charley!" she thought, "it's all my fault. I've not been 'kindly affectioned' toward him at all."

She knelt down beside him, kissed his hot cheek, and said, gently:

"No, no, Charley dear, sister don't want to be bad; only she's in a great hurry this morn-



ing. I love little Charley very much—won't that do?"

"No!" said the young man sturdily, but in a softer tone; "I want my horse harnessed."

"Well," answered Nelly, checking her impatience, and sitting down on the floor beside him, as she lifted up the horse and wagon, "I will harness it for you; but won't Charley be sorry for poor sister Nelly if she goes late to school, and gets bad marks!"

Charley was too young to go to school, but he had sometimes heard Nelly speak of bad marks, and had a vague idea that they were something very much to be dreaded; besides, Nelly's altered manner had softened him wonderfully. He put his arms about her neck, and said:

"Go to school quick, Nelly! I'll put horsey in his stable till you come back."

"No, you needn't, darling," laughed his sister, as she adjusted the last strap. "See he's all harnessed. Kiss, Nelly; and now, ar'n't you sorry you were naughty?"

"Yes," answered the little fellow, solemnly. And the next moment Nelly was half-way down the stairs, smiling to herself as she heard his joyous "Whoa! Go 'long" in the upper hall.



"It *is* better to be 'kindly affectionate one to another,'" thought the happy girl, as she hastened on her way to school, "and I do hope I'll never forget the verse. 'In honor preferring one another,' that will be harder to do; for everybody wants to take the best chance in this world, Aunt Emmy says; but I'll try to do right indeed I will.

And there, in the crowded street, an earnest, unuttered prayer went up from the little girl's heart, that God would help her to remember and to follow the beautiful lesson. It was but for an instant. Ere she turned the street, she was chatting in the midst of a group of school-girls; but the halo of His answer was like sunshine in her heart.

"I am so glad to meet you," said Nelly, as the girls walked on together. "I thought I was late. What's the matter, Jenny?" she whispered to the one nearest her.

"Nothing," replied Jenny. "Why? Are my eyes red?"

"Yes; just as red as—" Nelly was going to say, "as they can be," but she remembered something somebody had said to her about exaggeration, so she checked herself, and added, "as if you had been crying."

"Well, I *have* been crying like sixty, if you



want to know," rejoined the thoughtless girl; "and I'd like to know who wouldn't cry? There, mother's going to keep my sister Henrietta from school to-day, and take her on the steamboat to Staten Island, just on account of Etty's health. I coaxed her ever so hard to be allowed to go, too, but it was of no use. Henrietta's health does make me sick," added Jenny, with an air of deep disgust. "Every little thing has to be done for *her*, and nothing for me. She is just the whiningest little—"

"Oh! Jenny," interrupted Nelly, "you shouldn't talk so. You know poor Henrietta is really very delicate, and you have health and strength, and—"

"Pshaw! Don't preach!" sneered her companion. "We'll get preaching enough I warrant, when the new teacher makes one of her long speeches this morning. I can't bear her, for my part."

"Nor I, neither," said one of the girls.

"Jenny," asked Nelly suddenly, "do you know your Bible verse? We have the same one, you know."

"Certainly I do," was the reply. "I know it by heart, and all my other lessons, too."

"*By heart!*" echoed Nelly; "Oh! Jenny, I



wish we could all learn it by heart—it's a splendid verse."

"Preaching again! I declare if you ain't at it bright and early this morning," sneered Jenny, as she bounced ahead of the main group to whisper to Julia Green that Nelly Davis was "getting to be real stuck up." In a moment more the school-house was reached.

In due course of time the girls were called upon to repeat their verses. Jenny Scott stood up first, and recited hers glibly enough.

"Very well," said the new teacher, approvingly, "except that you spoke too rapidly."

Jenny returned to her seat with a satisfied swing of the skirt.

"Julia Green!" said the teacher.

Julia's verse was from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!" And she repeated it in a clear, earnest voice, that made Jenny Scott ask, in a whisper, of the girl beside her, if she didn't think Jule Green was "dreadfully affected!"

"No whispering!" exclaimed the teacher, in an austere voice.

Other girls stood up one by one and said their verses, and at last the teacher called—



“Nelly Davis!”

Poor Nelly! she had been so absorbed in thought all this time, that when her name was uttered aloud it startled her, and seemed like a response to what was going on in her own mind; for, after thinking over the events of the morning, she had asked herself—

“Oh! what *did* make me speak so crossly to poor Charley, even while my verse was before my eyes?”

“Nelly Davis!” repeated the teacher, in a tone of surprise.

Nelly blushed, and walked quickly forward; but when she should have spoken, the words fled from her. She only colored more deeply, and remained silent.

“Well,” said the teacher, encouragingly, “you surely cannot have forgotten your verse already?”

“Yes—no, ma’am—I mean,” stammered Nelly; “I thought I knew it; I *do* know it; but—”

“But what?” asked the teacher.

“The words are—oh! now I remember them,” said Nelly, with a bright smile—“Be ye kind and affectionate toward each other in brotherly love; in honor—in honor—” and she paused in despair, resuming in an instant with



some hesitation—"in honors giving way to one another."

"That is not right," said the teacher, looking rather sternly at Nelly. "You have not read it carefully. Jenny Scott will please say the verse."

Jenny obeyed promptly,

"*Very* well," said the teacher, smiling kindly upon Jenny. "*You* have studied your verse very carefully, and, for the future, I hope Nelly will follow your good example."

Nelly returned to her seat penitent and humble.

At noontime the scholars rushed gladly into the play-ground, and all felt ready to enjoy their hour of holiday to the utmost. Some jumped with skipping-ropes, some chased their wooden or iron hoops about ; two or three were vainly trying to make their roller-skates "go" on the rough flag-stones ; a few clustered about a fine swing, waiting for their "turn," and others walked in pairs with arms fondly twined about each other's waists.

"Do, Kitty, look at that fat little thing, Bertha Lee, in the corner of the piazza," said one of the girls to her companion. "I do believe she's eating her lunch yet—she is the



slowest little thing ! Before I'd use up all noon-time eating, I guess I'd know it ! ”

“ Why, no—she has just come out from the school-room,” rejoined Kitty. “ I rather think she's been kept in.”

“ Oh ! yes, now I know ; she missed her geography lesson. Wasn't it too funny ? I thought I should give up when the stupid little thing said the Mississippi River emptied into Lake Superior ”—and Jenny Scott, for it was she, laughed heartily at the recollection.

“ Yes,” returned Kitty, “ she said it in such a confident way, too ; that made it funnier. But you made a mistake, too, Jenny ; you said that St. Helena was celebrated for being the birth-place of Napoleon Bonaparte.

“ Well, what of that ? ” exclaimed Jenny, rather sharply. “ I knew it was *something* about Napoleon—didn't I ? Anybody might have made that mistake ! ”

“ Yes ; so they might,” rejoined Kitty, soothingly. “ But do look !—if there isn't Nelly Davis showing little Fatty how to study her geography lesson. She's a real good-hearted girl, anyhow.”

“ Pooh ! Nelly Davis isn't any better than other folks. But, my goodness, mustn't she have felt flat this morning about her Bible verse ?



I never saw anything so stupid ; why, she didn't know it at all. Wasn't I lucky, though? I knew mine *perfectly*. I was glad, too, to get ahead of her for once, for I don't like her one bit lately. She's one of your sickish, good kind—always trying to be something wonderful."

Kitty felt at heart that this sort of gossip was unkind and dishonorable, but she lacked courage to refuse to listen to it, for fear that Jenny would call her one of the "sickish, good kind," too. Poor Kitty!—she is not the first girl who has allowed the bugbear, Ridicule, to frighten away good angels knocking at her heart.

By this time, Nelly apparently had explained away the difficulties that had troubled the plump little geography student, for the latter was looking up at her with a grateful smile; and presently they descended the piazza steps together. Nelly was saying:

"You are not so badly off after all, Bertha for the half-hour bell has not rung yet, and you will have plenty of time to play."

"I owe it all to you," Bertha replied, "if I have, for I never could have understood that lesson by myself. But, Nelly, I did feel real sorry for you this morning about your Bible verse, and there was Jenny Scott laughing at



you all the time. I think it was real mean in her."

"Oh! Bertha," whispered Nelly, "don't talk against your schoolmates; I'm sure it's wrong; besides, I deserved to be laughed at for being so forgetful. And yet," she added, thoughtfully, "I think I did remember the verse, though the exact words slipped from my mind. At any rate, I shall try hard never to forget them again."

"Oh! who'll give me just one push?" called out, at this moment, a little girl, who, after waiting meekly for nearly half an hour, had finally gained possession of the swing.

"I will," said Nelly, promptly, hastening to her side; "wait, Bertha, you shall have the next turn."

The "just one push" was multiplied many times by the willing Nelly, before Bertha found herself in the seat. Her turn did not last quite so long, for her friend's strength was giving out. At last Nelly exerted her aching arms to give one grand final push, and then turned away with a laughing "There, let the old cat die now."

Whether the "old cat" was the swing, or Miss Bertha, I cannot say, and Nelly did not wait to explain. Her attention at that instant was



attracted by hearing Jenny Scott say, in a tone of despair :

“ Oh ! dear, it’s certainly gone ; I’ve looked everywhere. Mother will almost kill me for being so careless.”

Nelly knew well enough that the “ almost kill ” was an exaggeration, but she walked toward the disconsolate girl, saying, kindly :

“ What have you lost ? Bertha and I will help you look for it.”

“ Oh ! a twenty-dollar note mother gave me to pay my quarter’s bill with,” replied Jenny, bursting into tears. “ I had it when I came out of the house. I’m afraid it’s all trampled down in the grass by this time, and the last bell will ring soon”—then suddenly raising her voice Jenny called out, “ I’ll give my old roller-skates to anybody who finds a twenty-dollar note that I’ve lost somewhere in the yard.”

All crowded eagerly around Jenny.

“ There, don’t waste time, girls,” she almost screamed ; “ the bell will ring in a few moments.

Don’t you hear ? I’ll give my roller skates to the one who finds the money.”

Nearly all the girls would have gladly helped her to look for it without the prospect of any reward ; but the promised skates did not check



their zeal in the least. At it they went, heart, eyes, and hands—running in different directions, bumping against each other, looking into all sorts of impossible places, peering into bushes, picking up old soiled bits of paper, with the joyful cry, “I’ve found it!” fairly combing the poor half-killed grass with eager fingers; and there was the bill all the time lying out in broad daylight, close by the fence where Jenny Scott had been standing!

Nellie Davis was the first to spy it. Quick as thought she glanced at Bertha, who was too poor to buy roller skates for herself, and the last clause of her Bible verse flashed through her mind—“*In honor preferring one another.*”

“Yes, Bertha shall have the honor of finding it,” said Nelly to herself, as she hurried up to the little girl, and whispered:

“Run over by the end fence, and search—the girls haven’t looked there yet—quick! Bertie.”

In less than a moment, Bertha, not at all “slow” in her movements now, came bounding back, waving the bank note over her head.

“Hurrah!” she cried, her eyes fairly sparkling with delight. “I’ve found it! Jenny! Jenny! here’s your money!”

Jenny, as she eagerly held out her hand, ex-



claimed: "I had given it up entirely—much obliged to you, Bertha! You'll find my skates over there by the basement door."

At this moment the school-bell rang, and all the girls hastened to obey the summons.

After school the teacher summoned Nelly to her side.

"You have said your lessons so well to-day, Nelly, that I shall not give you a bad mark for missing your Bible verse. But after this, remember, my dear, that merely reading it over once will not suffice. You must learn it thoroughly, as Jenny Scott does."

If the teacher could have looked into the hearts of her two pupils, she probably would not have spoken precisely as she did; but Nelly felt the justice of her reproof, and replied, cheerfully:

"Yes, Miss Allen, I'll try; but it has always been difficult for me to remember anything word for word."

That evening when little Charley kissed Nelly for "good night," somebody asked him how much he loved her.

"I love her *so* much," answered Charley, stretching his dimpled arms high above his head, "I love her *more'n* I do my horsey!"

And here my story must end. It is only the



history of a day, to be sure ; but is not life made up of days ?

“ Days are golden links, God’s token,  
Reaching heaven ; one by one  
Take them, lest the chain be broken,  
Ere the pilgrimage be done.”

What a blessed thing it would be if we could rivet each of these golden links with something beautiful and true, *learned by heart !*



























